

**FOLLOWERS AND LEADERSHIP DURABILITY**  
**An analysis of leadership support in the New Zealand Labour Party:**  
**1990 - 1996**

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**To my maternal grandmother, who in the last five years, never missed an opportunity to ask: 'Have you finished your thesis yet?'**

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the interest they generate in the public and media, changes of political party leadership in western democracies have received surprisingly little academic analysis. The existing knowledge and understanding of how and why party leadership changes is severely limited. New Zealand is no exception. In an attempt to rectify this situation, this study seeks to offer a theory which can sufficiently explain (and predict) leadership vulnerability of the New Zealand Labour Party. The emphasis is placed on caucus members who have exclusive power to select and de-select their leaders. Through two case studies – the 1993 leadership change and the unsuccessful 1996 leadership change attempt – against which the theory is tested, it is argued that *quality* of support that a leader receives on his/her selection has significant importance to her/his future.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ECA	Employment Contract Act
EPLP	External Parliamentary Party
FPP	first-past-the-post
MMP	mixed member proportional
MMSC	Mike Moore Supporters Club
NZF	New Zealand First
NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
TVNZ	Television New Zealand

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### Introduction

In modern western democracies, leaders of major political parties come and go. Some changes are induced by death or age/health-related voluntary retirement, while others are caused as a result of internal challenges or a coup. Faced with internal dissent, some leaders relinquish the position quietly, while others fight with the utmost resistance. Either way, leadership changes attract a significant amount of attention by the media and the public. The fascination is understandable. They showcase great human dramas and emotions in stark contrast: victor and loser, elation and dejection, naked ambitions and their rationalisations (often in the name of the greater public good), intensive contentions and ensuing peace. In today's society where issues are often highly complicated and technical, leadership changes offer the public rare occasions to understand national politics on a simple, or even 'primitive', level<sup>1</sup>.

### Aims of the study

Despite such a high level of interest, the subject of leadership vulnerability has received surprisingly little academic treatment. As discussed in the next chapter, while the situation is particularly noticeable in New Zealand, a lack of formalised knowledge of the two leadership crises proves to be the norm rather than an exception elsewhere, too. For example, clearly, both successful and unsuccessful leadership changes are disruptive for a political party. Yet, the existing knowledge cannot provide an adequate explanation as to why some succeed and others fail.

This situation is particularly lamentable because changes of leaders of major political parties are events of significant importance, worthy of interest and the attention of serious academic analysis. In the Westminster system, it is normally considered necessary for any aspiring prime minister to first attain the leadership of his/her own political party<sup>2</sup>. On becoming a party leader, s/he inherits significant power and has a role to play in various areas even without assuming the prime ministership, as Marsh wrote:

Parliamentary elections are commonly 'presidential' in character, with each party's leader playing a very prominent role in the campaign. In government too party leaders play a decisive role in policy formation and selection in both single party and coalition governments. (1993: 229)

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<sup>1</sup> Ridley put it: 'For most, politics is a complicated business and all but the highlights are boring as well. The highlights are about people in politics, human interest, too often scandals, rather than the machinery of the political system' (Ridley, 1999: 309).

<sup>2</sup> Commenting on the British situation, Stark asserted that: '[p]arty leadership is ... the pathway to the premiership'. (1996: 2) For the New Zealand context, see Palmer and Palmer (1997), p.54.

There are two main aims of this study. The first is to record the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP)'s 1993 leadership change and 1996 leadership crisis, where the leader, Helen Clark came under pressure to resign, as accurately as possible<sup>3</sup>. Like most of the leadership crises in this country, both events attracted huge media and public interest. However, our knowledge of them barely extends beyond an accumulation of the media reports as they unfolded. There has been no attempt by journalists to investigate and reconstruct exactly what happened in detail. Similarly, no scholars have tried to analyse them from an academic viewpoint.

The second, and more important, aim is to examine the mechanisms of party leadership (de)selection processes in the NZLP. Many aspects of these mechanisms are not well understood. What qualities do selectors seek in a leader? In particular, what are the important variables that influence the positions of selectors? What factors effect leaders' durability? These questions are of significant importance to students of New Zealand politics. The ultimate goal here is to contribute to the existing literature of leadership durability. As pointed out in the next chapter, one of the problems in the existing literature is that there is no systematic theory available sufficiently capable of explaining leadership durability in the NZLP. Most of the previous scholarly work in this field has been conducted overseas and has tended to use ad hoc case studies. Few attempts have been made to 'theorise' findings for wider application. The small number of theories that are available offer only limited applications to other studies. In an effort to rectify this situation, this study aims to provide a theoretical framework within which, at the least, durability of the NZLP leadership can be understood/explained.

Before explaining how this study seeks to achieve these aims, a brief background of the NZLP's past leadership crises is necessary.

### **The New Zealand Labour Party and past leadership crises**

Eleven people have served as the NZLP leaders. There have been two periods of leadership security in the history of the NZLP since its first inception in Parliament in 1918. The first period between 1918 and 1974 saw six leaders: Harry E. Holland (1918-1933); Michael Joseph Savage (1933-1940); Peter Fraser (1940-1950); Walter Nash (1950-1963); Arnold Nordmeyer (1963-1966); and Norman Kirk (1966-1974). During this first period, with the exception of Nordmeyer, all the leaders were replaced as a result of death or retirement induced by age. The second period from Bill Rowling (1974-1983) onwards has been characterised by more volatility. Rowling, David Lange (1983-1989); Geoffrey Palmer (1989-1990); and Mike Moore (1990-1993) all lost their leadership under pressure of one form or another, whereas in 1996 Clark successfully

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<sup>3</sup> The choice of these case studies is justified in the next chapter.

withstood pressure to go and eventually became Prime Minister. It is, then, the period dating from the Rowling premiership that provides the relevant setting.

### **Rowling: The 1980 leadership crisis**

After losing two consecutive elections in 1975 and 1978<sup>4</sup>, the Labour caucus was in disarray (McRobie, 1992: 397). By late 1980, the caucus was roughly divided into two groups (James, 1986: 156-157) which were practically pro- and anti-Rowling camps. Although the division line was mainly based upon personalities (James, 1986: 157), there was also an ideological tinge to it, over economic policy<sup>5</sup> (Bassett, 1998: 349-350). One of the leaders of the insurgents was Roger Douglas. Although once considered a close supporter of Rowling (Bassett, 1976: 164), he had become increasingly frustrated with the direction of economic policy under Rowling and his shadow finance minister<sup>6</sup>, Bob Tizard, and started to develop his own ideas<sup>7</sup>.

Rowling's personal leadership style became a target of criticism, too. The mild-mannered leader was often – unfairly at least in one observer's view (Henderson, 1981 and 1992) – described as 'weak' by his opponents, a label that he struggled to discard (Henderson, 1981: 13). His critics in the caucus also saw the leader as 'indecisive' and 'the old guard'. The morale of the caucus declined as internal discontent continued (Moore, 1993b: 82).

However, what concerned many Labour MPs was Labour's popularity and hence its electoral prospect at the coming election. Alarm bells rang when the by-election for an Auckland seat, East Coast Bays, was held in September 1980. This former National seat went to the Social Credit candidate, Garry Knapp, with Labour occupying the humiliating third place. As a result, a number of Auckland MPs became wary, and started considering the need for a radical change including a change of leadership (Henderson, 1981: 15).

The worry of the Auckland MPs became more prevalent across the caucus as the popularity of the Social Credit party soared in the subsequent opinion poll results at the expense of Labour. It heightened after *the New Zealand Herald* – National Research Bureau survey was released on 8 December 1980. Labour was, for the first time, ranked

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<sup>4</sup> In 1978 and again in 1981, Labour won more votes than National. However, because of the high concentration of votes in the safe seats and the first-past-the-post electoral system, National held on to the Treasury benches.

<sup>5</sup> There is little question that the economic policy which Douglas later promoted as the Minister of Finance in the fourth Labour Government was at variance with that supported by Rowling and his supporters. However, how Douglas' view differed from Rowling at the time of 1980 leadership crisis is a moot point. See, Oliver (1989).

<sup>6</sup> Rowling introduced, rather unsuccessfully, a shadow cabinet system after the 1978 election (McRobie, 1992: 397).

<sup>7</sup> For the sources of his ideas, see, James (1986: 136-137). See, also, Oliver (1989) for the development of Douglas' policy views between 1981 and 1984.

third behind National and Social Credit. Furthermore, the same poll result showed that Rowling was behind not only the National Prime Minister, Muldoon, but also his own deputy, David Lange, in the 'preferred Prime Minister' ratings (Henderson, 1981: 17).

The anti-Rowling factions capitalised on these opinion poll results. Already having failed to persuade the leader to step down voluntarily in October 1980 (Henderson, 1981: 16), they opted now for a less subtle method. With the belief that a change should take place before the election year and outside the parliamentary session (Henderson, 1981: 17), the anti-Rowling group hastily organised a formal coup. Lange was the insurgents' chosen alternative<sup>8</sup>. Apart from his rising popularity, his obvious talent and non-association with the troubled third Labour Government made him an ideal candidate (Moore, 1993b: 82). At the earlier stage of the coup, the numbers looked promising for this group. According to Moore (one of the core Lange supporters), they had gained signatures from a majority of the caucus in favour of a leadership change (Moore, 1993b: 83).

Rowling and his supporters (which included Helen Clark), however, were not prepared to succumb to the pressure. Once the news of the coup was out, intensive lobbying for the leader ensued. One of the pivotal figures in this fight-back campaign was the Party President, Jim Anderton, who came out publicly calling for support for Rowling, while putting enormous pressure on wavering MPs (Henderson, 1981: 25; Moore, 1993b: 83; Wright, 1984: 123-125). Combined with strong support for the incumbent shown by local electorates (Henderson, 1981: 15-20), two MPs allegedly changed their positions to the Rowling camp within the last 24 hours before the vote, depriving the insurgents of crucial numbers (Henderson, 1981: 25; Moore, 1993b: 84).

A special caucus meeting was organised on 12 December 1980. After some blunt exchanges of opinions – including severe criticisms of the leadership – the issue was put to a vote. Since no alternative leaders were sought, it was practically a confidence motion in Rowling. The result could not have been closer. The incumbent leader won by a single vote (Henderson, 1981: 24).

### **The Rowling/Lange succession**

As the anti-Rowling group feared, Labour lost the 1981 election – the third consecutive election loss under the same leadership. The fact that Labour once again won more votes than National gave little comfort to the MPs who were increasingly impatient with being in opposition. The anti-Rowling MPs attributed the defeat to a lack of imagination as well as the absence of strong leadership (Moore, 1993b: 85). Given this view, it was only a matter of time before the move to depose the leader resurfaced. At

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<sup>8</sup> However, Henderson noted that Lange was not necessarily the unanimous choice of the pro-change group. (Henderson, 1981: 25)



the same time, support for Lange steadily grew in the caucus as well as in the public (Moore, 1993b: 88). There was the prevailing sense of inevitability of a leadership change in the caucus. The divisions were no longer between the pro- and anti- Rowling, but between the pro- and anti-Lange camps (Wright, 1984: 127).

What changed the caucus balance in Lange's favour was his handling of the leadership during Rowling's one-month overseas trip in September 1982 (James, 1986: 157). The acting Leader of the Opposition not only demonstrated his delicate political skills but also proved his ability to match and beat the Prime Minister, Muldoon, who had long dominated Rowling (Wright, 1984: 127-128). In the meantime, Lange's ascent in the opinion polls continued. By October 1982, Lange had trebled in the preferred Prime Minister ratings, with Rowling trailing far behind (Wright, 1984: 127). It was also clear by then that a majority of the caucus members were now supporting the popular deputy leader (Bassett, 1998: 370).

With some staunch supporters behind him, Rowling had refused to step aside on his return from the trip (James, 1986: 157). But by early December, even the resilient leader realised that he did not have the numbers to retain his position. He called a special caucus meeting just before Christmas in 1982 where he announced his intention not to stand for the next regular leadership review in the following February (Moore, 1993b: 88). When the caucus meeting was held on 3 February 1983, Lange's selection was a mere formality. Although a long-time Rowling supporter, Russell Marshall, made himself available as the alternative candidate, it was seen as a token resistance (James, 1986:157).

### **The 1988-1989 Leadership crises and the Lange/Palmer succession**

As his supporters hoped, Lange successfully led the party to an election victory in 1984. However, the euphoria did not last long. While implementing sweeping reforms in a number of areas (Boston and Holland, 1987; Holland and Boston, 1990), it was gradually disintegrating from within. Despite retaining the office with an increased majority at the 1987 election, Labour's second term was plagued by prolonged disputes between Lange and the Minister of Finance, Douglas over the party's desirable policy direction<sup>9</sup>.

The tension steadily and noticeably continued to build up between the two figures until Douglas resigned from the Cabinet on 14 December 1988, after several attempts by Lange to persuade or compel him to do so. Being furious with the leader's treatment, Douglas came to believe strongly that Lange had to go as the leader (Douglas, 1993: 51).

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<sup>9</sup> Lange, content with the economic liberalisation already achieved in the first term, started to feel uneasy with Douglas' enthusiasm to extend the 'more market approach' - in the name of efficiency gain - to social policy areas (eg., see, Russell, 1996: Chapter 12 and 13).

Presumably in the hope of clarifying the situation once and for all and to re-establish his authority, Lange himself called for a leadership vote at the caucus meeting following Douglas' resignation (McQueen, 1991: 134). Although having entered the race, Douglas portrayed himself as a reluctant contender. Fully aware of his slim chance of winning<sup>10</sup>, his intention appeared to be to find someone else who could muster sufficient numbers to oust his arch-rival. When no such person emerged, the former Minister of Finance had no choice but to enter the race himself to avert the likely accusation that he had shied away from the showdown (Sheppard, 1999: 168).

The vote result was decisive – 38 for Lange and 15 for Douglas with two informals (Sheppard, 1999: 169). However, this by no means put an end to the infighting. After the vote, Douglas and his supporters declared a six-month campaign to topple the Prime Minister, with himself or someone else as his replacement (McQueen, 1991: 134).

In April 1989, Lange was once again in trouble. His speech in which New Zealand's possible formal withdrawal from the ANZUS council was suggested immediately put Lange's own leadership under scrutiny. This time, those who felt let down included some of his usual allies (Sheppard, 1999: 207). Probably, the biggest cost of the controversial speech was the loss of unconditional support by his deputy, Geoffrey Palmer. In the face of the latest crisis, he confessed to the troubled leader that he would make himself available in case of a leadership vacancy. Lange long considered Palmer's unfailing loyalty, accompanied by his pledge not to make himself available for the leadership under any circumstances<sup>11</sup>, his biggest safeguard against a potential coup (Lange, 1990: 206).

Meanwhile, Douglas kept his word and continued his destabilisation campaign. In the caucus and through publications and public meetings, he advocated his own policy agendas (Sheppard, 1999: 186). It was obvious that the on-going dispute between the two prominent figures was hurting the Government's popularity and it had been trailing National in the opinion polls for quite a while<sup>12</sup>. Worried colleagues attempted to reconcile the two by setting up several meetings without significant success (Sheppard, 1999: 188-189). After the final meeting failed to produce any meaningful result, Douglas and his supporters – including some Cabinet Ministers – decided to test Lange's leadership in a vote once again (Sheppard, 1999: 189)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> His chance was unlikely to have been helped by his decision to invite journalists to inspect confidential Cabinet papers in the wake of his resignation. Douglas was eventually stopped and reprimanded by Palmer, a former law professor before entering Parliament.

<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Palmer's stance was generally understood to be: 'if the PM went, he would go too' (McQueen, 1991: 152). See, also Lange (1990), p.206.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Vowles and Aimer (1993: 3, Graph 1-1; 186-188).

<sup>13</sup> The news of a leadership coup travelled fast. Unlike the previous year's vote, this time the result was expected to be much closer. This was reflected on the sense of urgency on both sides. MPs who were overseas at that time were contacted through different means and they hurriedly came home. (Davies, 1997: 109-112).

The vote held on 29 June 1989 was not between Douglas and Lange. The former Finance Minister and his supporters had judged that the best chance to defeat Lange was to focus on a confidence issue without standing an alternative. In case that there was a majority no-confidence vote in the leader, Palmer was expected by many to win the subsequent leadership vote. By taking this option, the anti-Lange faction was hoping to win support from those who held concerns about Lange's leadership but were not prepared to support Douglas as the new leader (Sheppard, 1999: 190).

The vote, taken by secret ballot, confirmed Lange's position as the leader. Although the result was never officially revealed, even by Lange's admission, it was believed to be by a quite small margin (Sheppard, 1999: 190).

Lange's narrow victory at the 29 June 1989 caucus meeting was not the end of the saga. Shortly afterwards, some Labour MPs publicly started to call for Douglas' return to the Cabinet (McQueen, 1991: 178-179). Although the next Cabinet reshuffle was scheduled in October, those MPs were demanding that it be advanced. This wish was granted and a caucus meeting to decide on who should fill the two vacant positions, earlier created by Douglas and Prebble, was held on 3 August 1989<sup>14</sup>.

At the caucus meeting, Douglas and Annette King were elected to the Cabinet (McQueen, 1991: 188). The result personally hurt Lange who took his arch-rival's return as a sign of disloyalty and no confidence in his leadership (Russell, 1996: 203) although he had not forewarned his caucus colleagues about the ramifications of their votes<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, this result forced the leader to ask himself whether he was prepared to endure the emotional strain that he had been subjected to ever since his relationship with Douglas collapsed. His answer was negative.

As soon as Lange's intention was known, the race for his replacement commenced. As Douglas realised once again that he stood no chance of becoming the leader, the contenders were quickly narrowed down to two MPs<sup>16</sup>: Palmer and Moore (McQueen, 1991: 192). On 8 August 1989, the caucus elected Palmer by a significant margin.

### **The Palmer/Moore succession**

Within thirteen months of Palmer's selection, the Labour caucus had to select another leader. On 4 September 1990, Palmer voluntarily stepped down as the leader.

Palmer succeeded Lange in the most unenviable circumstances. The party was in serious disarray. After the five years of controversial Government policies, divisions

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<sup>14</sup> The Labour Caucus Rules stipulates that when in Government, the caucus elects the members of the Cabinet. It is the role of the leader (Prime Minister) to allocate the portfolios.

<sup>15</sup> See, Cullen's comments in Sheppard (1999), p.193.

<sup>16</sup> Palmer's close personal friend, Caygill, also considered standing for the election. After discussion with Palmer, however, both agreed that only one of them should be a candidate. Palmer was mutually preferred because of his deputy status, as well as his family situation (Caygill had a younger family). (Jackson, 1992a: 16)

throughout the party were obvious to everyone. The feud between Lange and Douglas had become so public that the party's public image had been irreversibly damaged (Palmer, 1992: 151). To make matters worse, the divisions were not confined to the Government caucus; they had also developed within the external Parliamentary Party (EPLP) (see, Sheppard, 1999) as well as between the EPLP and the Parliamentary wing (see Dyson, 1991). There was little Palmer could do to rectify this dire situation.

Given the problems that the Government was experiencing, its unpopularity with the public was not surprising. Although it enjoyed a brief 'honeymoon' period in the opinion polls immediately after the leadership change, the euphoria did not last. Once again, Labour was trailing National by a large margin. By July 1990, Palmer's personal popularity was also suffering; in some opinion polls, it rated lower than Mike Moore by a small margin (Sheppard, 1999: 227).

The dismal poll performance of both the leader and party gave wary MPs sufficient reasons to seriously entertain the idea of having another leadership change. Some MPs approached Moore, who had been soundly defeated in the previous leadership contest less than one year before, regarding his interest in challenging the troubled leader.

The leadership issue was discussed at the Cabinet meetings held on 27 August and 3 September, where the discontent with Palmer was stronger than in the caucus at large (McRobie, 1991: 56). At the 3 September meeting, the Cabinet was presented with a private polling result which suggested Labour's likely election defeat with the existing leader by a large margin. At the same time, the same poll indicated that the party's prospect would improve – even to the extent that a surprise victory could be possible – if Moore was to take over the leadership (Sheppard, 1999: 230).

At the caucus meeting held on 4 September 1990, Palmer unexpectedly announced his intention to resign from the leadership. A majority of the caucus was allegedly still behind him, and if a vote had been taken, it is believed that he would have retained the leadership (Brown, 1991). However, the previous day's Cabinet meeting, where more than half of the Ministers – including his deputy, Clark – expressed their preference for a leadership change (McRobie, 1991: 56), convinced him that it would not be a worthy fight.

After his announcement, the caucus duly held a vote to fill the vacancy. Two candidates stood for the contest. They were Moore, who had accepted his supporters' invitation to make himself available, and a backbencher, Richard Northey. The latter's candidacy was mostly in protest against the pressure brought by some of his colleagues to bear on Palmer. Not surprisingly, Moore was victorious although his rival reputedly managed to attract more than ten votes (Sheppard, 1999: 230).

### **The 1993 and 1996 leadership crises**

The desperate leadership change to Moore could not rescue Labour from the predictable defeat. Despite the magnitude of the loss - the caucus size was nearly halved – he continued to lead the party for the next three years. At the 1993 election, Labour recovered markedly, coming close to a victory. However, this achievement was not enough to save Moore's leadership when a challenge was mounted against him by his deputy, Helen Clark in December 1993, shortly after the election.

Although Moore's failure (narrowly) to recapture power after three years in opposition was no doubt a factor in his demise, the dissatisfaction with his leadership styles in the caucus was also believed to play a part. Less than two and half years later, it was Clark's turn to find herself in trouble. In late May 1996, five frontbenchers (Michael Cullen, Phil Goff, Annette King, Jim Sutton, and , Koro Wetere) who were concerned about the party's low popularity and its ramifications for the coming election, approached the leader asking her to voluntarily step down. Following her refusal, intense lobbying took place on behalf of the pro and anti-Clark groups. In the end, the former group prevailed and no coup eventuated. In a reflection of the previous contest, Moore was reported to be the anti-Clark camp's alternative leader.

Both incidents seemed to attract especially keen public and media interest. The latter's enthusiasm, in particular, led the President of the Labour Party at the time of the 1996 leadership crisis, Michael Hirschfeld, to comment that the media's attention on both occasions exceeded both 'reality' and the attention which it normally paid to 'disunity in other parties' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). What appeared to intensify the interest in both crises were the sharp contrasts between Moore and Clark as individuals; in addition to the gender difference, the two leaders were poles apart in many respects, in one journalist's words, they 'couldn't have been less alike' (McLoughlin, 2000: 83). With these added 'personal dimensions', the leadership crises naturally became more 'dramatic' from a spectator's viewpoint.

### **Moore and Clark - contrasting politicians<sup>17</sup>**

The circumstances during their childhoods were vastly different. Michael Kenneth Moore was born in 1949 in Whakatane and grew up in Northland. His childhood was plagued by numerous hardships. His family were poor and had to endure appalling living conditions<sup>18</sup>. His father died of a heart attack, brought on by a chronic asthma,

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<sup>17</sup> The information on Moore's personal history is drawn from his autobiography (1993b) while that of Clark from Myers (1986) unless otherwise indicated. Moore's *A Labour of Love* was a reprinted version (with added essays) of his autobiography, *Hard Labour*, published in 1987 (Auckland: Penguin).

<sup>18</sup> For example, his house became flooded every winter by a nearby river. To drain the water, the house had to have holes drilled in the floor. The river also caused the long-drop toilet in the backyard to flood. (Moore, 1993b: 9)

when Moore was just six, which resulted in him being passed around various members of the family. To compound his already severe difficulties, a young Moore suffered from a physical handicap, too – a deformed foot possibly as a result of polio – that forced him to wear a brace.

Clark, on the other hand, enjoyed a far more secure and stable upbringing provided by farming parents. Born in 1950 in Hamilton, she grew up on the family farm in Waikato. Although she had a series of health problems<sup>19</sup>, the sort of daily struggles that Moore endured were completely alien to her.

As a consequence of their inhibiting health problems, both Moore and Clark developed a love for reading at young age. However, despite their common thirst for knowledge and widely recognised intelligence, their academic achievement greatly differed. Moore was not a success at educational institutions, and was essentially a self-taught man. At Dilworth – a boarding school for children from underprivileged homes – he often ran away until he was eventually taken out of the school by his mother<sup>20</sup>. After passing school certificate in non-academic subjects, he unsuccessfully tried UE mathematics and physics (McLoughlin, 1991: 47). Clark, in contrast, thrived in education. She went to Auckland University, where she majored in political studies. She received an MA with honours and then embarked on her study towards a Ph.D. on a scholarship, although the degree was never completed. To testify her success at her study, Clark was appointed as a junior lecturer in the Political Studies Department at Auckland University at the age of 23, even before the completion of her MA.

Not surprisingly, their career paths prior to politics took drastically different directions. As noted above, Clark was a professional academic. Until her election to Parliament in 1981, she remained at the university, holding the position as a lecturer. In contrast, Moore was a blue-collar worker. His first job after school was as a labourer for a bricklayer. The second was a position in a printing company, which he later described as a storeman and packer. Between 1975 and 1978, while he was out of Parliament, he attempted to find a position as a middle manager without success. He eventually worked as a nightwatchman on a dredge, and then as a social worker at a psychiatric hospital.

The differences also extended to their public images, personalities, and personal lives. In the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) which had become increasingly representative of the educated, middle class<sup>21</sup> (to which Clark belonged), Moore rightly (and proudly) saw himself as a man of the ordinary people. His public persona was open, warm,

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<sup>19</sup> After having spent her formative years associating mainly with family members including her three siblings only, she developed a lot of psychosomatic illnesses from having to deal with other children when she went to primary school. In addition, she suffered from asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, and a collapsed lung during her youth.

<sup>20</sup> However, Moore claimed that he was expelled (Moore, 1993b: 12). See, also Taylor (1990).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Gustafson (1992).

extrovert, emotional, and somewhat unpredictable. He openly professed to his lack of cultural sophistication, and was fond of smoking and beer drinking. He married his wife, Yvonne, when he was 26. Despite their wishes, they were childless, allegedly as a result of Moore's bout with a serious cancer in the 1977-79 period.

Clark, on the other hand, was generally perceived as cold, reserved, unemotional, focused and disciplined. Unlike Moore, she did not claim to have the tastes of ordinary people. She admitted her dislike of sports including rugby – the national sport – and instead listed opera, films, classical music and theatre amongst her interests. As a former asthma sufferer, she despised smoking, and indeed as the Minister of Health, introduced the Smoke-Free Environments Bill, which restricted smoking areas as well as prohibited all tobacco advertising and sponsorship (McCallum, 1993: 153). She reluctantly married Peter Davies, a medical sociologist (and her partner of five years), prior to her election to Parliament in 1981, in order to pre-empt attacks on her personal life during that election campaign. Like the Moores, the couple were without children. But Clark's reason was different. She chose not to have offspring because of her respect for her own privacy and personal space as well as her devotion to politics (Baysting, et al., 1993: 38).

If there was something in common between these markedly different individuals, it was a passion for (or even obsession with) politics, which eventually brought them together. After joining the NZLP through the Printers' Union in 1966, Moore rose in the party organisation at a remarkable speed. First, he was elected as a newly created youth representative on the National Executive in 1968, becoming the youngest member of Labour's governing body in its history. After three years in that position, he stepped down to be elected as Junior Vice-President of the party.

Although coming from a pro-National family, at the university Clark became drawn to causes such as the anti-Vietnam War and anti-All Black tour to South Africa. She joined the NZLP in 1972. Once in the organisation, like Moore, she quickly established herself. In 1973, at the Youth Conference, which she attended for the first time, she ended up as the president of the Youth Council. In addition, she became an Executive Member of the party's Auckland Regional Council, Secretary of the Labour Women's Council, and a member of the Policy Council.

In the meantime, greater political ambitions were driving both of them. After having stood unsuccessfully for local elections<sup>22</sup>, there was a sense of inevitability that their aim shifted to national politics. Having helped several Labour MPs' election campaigns, Moore decided to give himself a chance in 1972. Although his chosen seat, Eden, was then held firmly by National and considered highly unwinnable, as he had done so on

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<sup>22</sup> Clark stood for the Auckland Regional Authority and Auckland City Council in 1974 and 1977 respectively. Moore tried his luck in 1971 by standing for the Papatoetoe City council election.

many occasions throughout his life, Moore beat the odds with vigorous campaigning. Also, no doubt assisted by a nation-wide landslide against National, he became the youngest MP (at the age of 23) in New Zealand history.

However, Moore's first parliamentary experience did not last long. At the 1975 election, he found himself as one of the 23 Labour MPs who lost their seats in the landslide victory by National. Once outside parliament, he kept a watchful eye open for an opportunity to return to Parliament. After unsuccessfully seeking to secure a nomination as a Labour candidate in two seats, in 1978 Moore finally won the candidacy in Christchurch North. By winning the seat with a comfortable majority, he re-entered national politics.

Clark's turn arrived in 1975. After missing out on the candidacy of Auckland Central, she secured the Labour nomination for the rural Piako seat, strongly held by National. With no chance of winning, her sole aim was to gain campaigning experience for the future. This experience certainly helped her six years later when she stood for and won the seat of Mt Albert. This win made her the second woman MP ever to represent an Auckland electorate.

Once in Parliament, Moore and Clark's paths took a similar route - rising in the caucus ranking after initial difficulties. For Moore, a breakthrough came when David Lange - of whom he was a strong proponent - replaced Bill Rowling (who was suspicious of Moore) as the leader in 1983. Although Moore himself missed out on the deputy leader's position to Geoffrey Palmer by one vote, he was not overlooked when Labour became the Government in 1984. He was made the third ranked minister, holding the portfolio of - amongst others - Overseas Trade and Marketing. He held and relished this position until he became the leader in 1990.

When Labour won office in 1984 and the Cabinet was announced, Clark was one of those bitterly disappointed. Allegedly falling victim to factionalism, she missed out not only ministership (which was determined by a caucus vote) but also positions of under-secretary (that were allocated by the leadership<sup>23</sup>). Her fortune improved in the second term of the fourth Labour Government with her appointment as the Minister of Housing and Conservation. She became the Minister of Health in January 1989, and then the deputy Prime Minister seven months later. When Moore became the leader (and Prime Minister) by replacing Palmer, she retained the No.2 position.

After surviving the 1996 crisis, Clark led the party to the 1996 election - the first election under the Mixed Member Proportional system. Although Labour received the smallest percentage share of the popular vote since 1928 (McRobie, 1998: 162) and failed to form a coalition government in the post-election negotiation, she escaped any

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<sup>23</sup> After recovering from the initial disappointment, Clark thrived on other given responsibilities. In particular, she relished her role as the chairperson of the Select Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Disarmament and Arms Control. (McCallum, 1993: 149-150)



serious criticisms – let alone challenges. Following its healthy popular support for most of the 1996 to 1999 period, Labour became the largest party at the 1999 election. With the Alliance, the party formed a minority coalition Government, which in turn made Clark the ninth Labour Prime Minister of New Zealand and the first elected woman Prime Minister.

After losing the leadership in 1993, Moore did not completely give up his aspiration to regain the top position of the party. However, it became blatantly obvious – especially after the 1996 leadership crisis – that it was likely to remain an unfulfilled dream. Upon this realisation, he eyed another goal. Following a nearly one year-long campaign, he was selected as the Director-General of the Geneva based World Trade Organisation in late July 1999<sup>24</sup>.

### **Research Method**

Two types of information sources are used in this study. Information on daily developments of the leadership crises as well as on general political events are drawn from the secondary sources, ie, the media reports. Both the 1993 leadership coup and 1996 leadership challenge received fairly comprehensive media coverage. Major newspapers, radio programmes, and to a considerably lesser extent, TV programmes, are consulted.

However, as already noted, these sources do not provide sufficient information for either accurate reconstruction of the events or their detailed analysis. Many key players in leadership changes/crises do not always reveal their inner-thoughts or feelings to the media. (They may be even tempted to mislead the media.) In order to overcome such deficiency, personal interviews play an essential part as the second information source for this study. In total, 26 individuals including MPs (both former and incumbent) and former party officials were personally interviewed between 1995 and 1999. In addition, eight people (including five individuals who had already been interviewed) were contacted through correspondence for (further) assistance.

Although attempts were made to obtain co-operation from more individuals, they were unsuccessful for several reasons. On two occasions, interviewees cancelled their appointments at the last minute because of their Parliament-related duties. With regard to another two MPs, mutually convenient times and locations could not be found for interviews. However, in most cases, requests for interviews and/or replies to written questions were declined or simply ignored. Although disappointing, this reaction was not surprising considering that most of them were sitting MPs when such contacts were made. With a snap election being constantly rumoured throughout 1998 and with Moore and Clark still remaining in the caucus, they might have had little incentive to

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Young (1999).

discuss this potentially risky topic<sup>25</sup>. Because of the media attention which Labour's party disunity had attracted in the past, there was unmistakable nervousness<sup>26</sup>.

In total, 17 people contacted did not participate in this study. Amongst them, Helen Clark's decision to make herself unavailable was a particular disappointment. Although she was approached with several propositions - the final one with written questions on general leadership matters only - the present Labour leader was adamant on her view that her participation would be inappropriate.

Despite a number of refusals, a sufficient number of people agreed to participate and, in the final analysis, they have covered the caucus' views in the relevant period representatively. However, there remains the possibility that the absentees may have affected the findings (and thus the conclusion) of the study. In particular, one area requires caution. One of the main propositions of this study is that leadership durability is strongly influenced by the leader's support composition. To identify an individual MP's position towards the leader at a certain point of time is a difficult task, even with the full participation of caucus members. MPs' memories are not infallible, and/or they may be tempted to 're-write' history since there is no official record to dispute their claim<sup>27</sup>. The difficulty of the task increases accordingly without co-operation of some MPs. Guessing their positions (or votes) inevitably risks inaccuracy. As veteran MP, Jonathan Hunt, warned:

That's why you've got to be very careful about people's opinions of other people's votes. If you get someone who specifically tells you what they did, that's probably quite likely to be correct. Probably. But if they won't tell you specifically, you don't take anything for granted. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

In support of Hunt's view, some caucus members' positions were disputed amongst their colleagues interviewed for this study. In such cases, the opinions of those who were personally closer to the MPs concerned or those who were involved in the lobbying were adopted. As a result, I am confident about the overall accuracy of the

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<sup>25</sup> A letter from Graham Kelly, MP, one of the MPs who declined my interview requests typifies this sentiment. 'This is not a matter that [I] am prepared to discuss now as it would be totally inappropriate [sic] to do so. Perhaps in the years ahead, when both the Members concerned are not in their current prominent positions, it might then be more appropriate to discuss such matters (Kelly, 1998)'.

<sup>26</sup> Although only one interviewee asked for complete anonymity prior to the interviews, many stipulated their inspection of certain drafts of this study prior to its final submission. After their inspections, further two interviewees requested anonymity.

<sup>27</sup> The 1993 caucus leadership vote was by secret ballot. The difficulty of position identification was particularly serious for the 1996 situation when Helen Clark's leadership came under pressure. Since no caucus vote was taken at that time, who was supporting whom and how strongly was a more elusive question than in the other situations. This problem was compounded by the fact that since the 1996 election, both Labour and Clark have enjoyed consistently high public support in the opinion polls.

support composition lists in this study, but this by no means guarantees absolute precision. It is important to stress that it should be treated with this point in mind.

A similar caution applies to other areas of this study, where findings are dependent upon information provided by the interviewees. I do not believe that any of the interviewees deliberately distorted information; on the contrary, in most cases, they were quite helpful and forthcoming. However, it seems rather naïve to expect interviewees to share all their insights, thoughts, and feelings. Some things were not said. For example, when asked the reasons for their support, or opposition to, a certain leader, no MP listed his/her future prospect under that leader. As seen later, the reasons for MPs' positions were often explained in terms of policy, the party's collective interest, or the leader's personality. However, personal ambitions can be a significant drive for MPs. National's short-lived leader, Jim McLay's demise was a good example. The plot to oust him was allegedly organised by a group of MPs who had been earlier demoted unceremoniously by McLay (Laws, 1998: 52-57). This incident led an observer to conclude:

Watching the supposed leaders-in-waiting of one's country engage in petty backbiting and errant behaviour quickly made me realise that personality not policy was a critical determinant of parliamentary action. Policy differences were simply used as an excuse to mask selfish motivation (Laws, 1998: 53).

MPs have aspirations and egos<sup>28</sup>, which can get boosted and bruised. If given a choice, most MPs would prefer their careers to be advanced to more prestigious, powerful, influential, and financially lucrative positions<sup>29</sup>. This may not form the base for deciding their support for many Labour MPs, but it is more than plausible if this factor comes into their calculation.

### **Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on leadership durability and leadership change in the Westminster system. The review also highlights some inadequacies in the existing knowledge base of leadership durability. The chapter then goes on to offer a theoretical framework with which analysis of leadership durability in the NZLP can be better understood. The framework is presented with a number of propositions whose validity is duly tested in Chapters 3-8.

These six chapters are divided into two blocs - Chapters 3, 4, and 5 deal with the 1993 leadership change while Chapters 6, 7, and 8 examine the 1996 leadership crisis.

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<sup>28</sup> Palmer commented in relation to New Zealand Prime Ministers, '... I often think that one of the greatest obstacles to political harmony is politicians' egos. We might be quite a lot better if a lot of politicians had their egos under control, which they don't' (McMillan, 1993: 61).

<sup>29</sup> The positions of party leadership, (some of) deputy leadership, Cabinet Ministers, Whips, and Chairpersons of Select Committees all come with monetary rewards. See, Taylor (1999), pp. 200-202.

Both blocs follow the same format. The first chapters (Chapters 3 and 6) narrate the development of each leadership crisis. The principal objective here is to provide an overview and background information about the events. The main sources of this information are media reports, supplemented by personal interviews where necessary.

The following two chapters of each bloc (Chapters 4 and 5, and 7 and 8) constitute the core of the case studies. The central question to be addressed in those chapters is whether the fate of each leader – the loss of the leadership for Moore and survival for Clark – can be satisfactorily explained in terms of the theoretical framework propositioned in Chapter 2. Examination of this question is achieved in two parts. Chapters 4 and 7 analyse each leader's behaviour and actions in an effort to retain/strengthen his/her leadership, as well as analyse his/her followers' reactions to them. The information in these chapters finds its source primarily in personal interviews.

Chapters 5 and 8 critically examine the validity of individual propositions against the findings. Furthermore, an attempt to explain the success and failure of those propositions is made and, where the propositions fail, suggestions for amendments are made accordingly. At the same time, any other variable, that seems relevant to leadership durability but falls outside the propositions, is identified and analysed.

The overall validity of the propositioned theory, based upon the evidence gathered in both case studies, is discussed in the final part of the study, Chapter 9. It then reviews the findings of the research and discusses the possible contribution towards our understandings of the subject.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature review

A political leader must keep looking over his [sic] shoulder all the time to see if the boys [sic] are still there. If they aren't still there, he's no longer a political leader. (Bernard Baruch<sup>30</sup>)

#### Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are twofold. First, the existing literature of leadership changes/durability is critically examined. Included in the examination is work done in New Zealand as well as in other western Westminster countries - most notably Britain. The state of our current knowledge and understanding of the subject is clarified. Also identified is the gap within the literature and, more specifically, its limited ability to sufficiently explain leadership durability and changes - including that of the NZLP.

The second purpose of the chapter is, in an attempt to rectify this situation, to propose an alternative theory. The theory is built upon the existing literature of not only immediately relevant fields but also other, wider leadership studies.

#### Studies of party leadership change

Despite their obvious importance, the questions *how* and *why* those party leaders are selected or de-selected have attracted remarkably little academic interest (Punnett: 1992: 3). Although this unfortunate trend has changed through a recent addition of studies on the subject, mainly in Britain - thanks to the recent changes of party leaders of the two major parties, and some other countries (eg., Marsh, 1993b<sup>31</sup>) - the subject still remains relatively unexplored (Stark, 1996: 2).

Likewise, party leadership selection has scarcely been a focus of academic interest in New Zealand. Several individual leadership changes and crises have received detailed anecdotal treatment by historians, political scientists, as well as those closely involved in those events<sup>32</sup>. However, so far, only two scholarly studies have been published on the subject of leadership selection and duration in general - one nearly twenty years ago

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Jay (1996: 32: 9)

<sup>31</sup> This special issue of *European Journal of Political Research* edited by Marsh comprises studies of Belgium, Britain, France, Republic of Ireland, Norway, and Spain. For Canadian state level party leadership selection, see Blake, Carty, and Erickson (1988) and Carty et al. (1990).

<sup>32</sup> For example, Political Science Professor and historian of the National Party, Gustafson described the party's leadership changes and crises in his book on a general history of the party (Gustafson, 1986a). Gustafson also wrote a useful chapter on a National Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake's leadership (1997a). Another political scientist, Henderson, recorded a failed leadership coup attempt against Bill Rowling (Labour) in 1980 (Henderson, 1981: Chapter 1). Sheppard, a political science graduate and researcher, carefully reconstructed the power struggle between Labour Prime Minister, David Lange, and his one-time Finance Minister, Roger Douglas (Sheppard, 1999). The same issue was also dealt with by one of Lange's former staff, McQueen (1991). A former Cabinet Minister of the Muldoon Government (National), Templeton, touched on the failed leadership coup attempt against the leader in 1980 in his memoir (Templeton, 1995: Chapter 14).

(Jackson, 1978) with the other more than a decade ago (Weller<sup>33</sup>, 1985: Chapter 3). In contrast, whilst Prime Ministership which has been studied by various academics (eg., Alley, 1992; Henderson, 1997; McLeay, 1995; Mulgan, 1994: Chapter 4; Palmer, 1992: Chapter 7; Palmer and Palmer, 1997: Chapter 4; Weller, 1985) little attention has been paid to party leadership. This situation is lamentable given the view that political parties are now widely recognised as occupying key positions in this country's political system (Mulgan, 1997: Chapter 10; the Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986).

In general, previous studies of party leadership change can be categorised into two groups according to their aims and analytical angles, although in some cases they overlap, especially in New Zealand.

### **A. Studies of rules and procedures**

The first group's perspective is 'macro'. It examines 'how' leadership change (selection) takes place. Studies in this group typically focus on the mechanism side of the phenomenon, ie., party rules and formal leadership selection procedures. The characteristics and the reasons/philosophy behind particular systems are a major interest of these studies. Although actual leadership changes are often analysed as case studies, they are used to illustrate these points in operation. In other words, leadership change outcomes are normally explained in relation to the unique biases inherent in each selection system. The questions often asked in this type of analysis include: 'Would different selection outcomes have resulted if different rules and procedures had been utilised?' and even 'Would the leadership change have been at all possible under different rules?' Along this vein, the duration of leadership is explained in the context of how much protection the incumbent leaders are provided under the existing system. Comparative perspectives either domestically or internationally are commonly applied in this type of study. Included in this group are Alderman (1992; 1994; and 1999) Alderman and Smith (1990), Cowley (1996), Heclo (1973), Marsh (1993b), Peabody (1984), Punnet (1992 and 1993), Stark (1996), Weller (1985 and 1992). The findings of these previous studies are summarised below:

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<sup>33</sup> Weller's primary interest was placed on prime ministers, not party leaders. However, his study is still useful for as already mentioned, to become prime minister, one has to assume the leadership of a political party, and the loss of the prime ministership normally induces the loss of the party leadership. Weller's study was carried out from a comparative perspective, examining three Westminster countries: New Zealand, Australia, Britain, and Canada. More recently, the same author repeated a similar attempt with the focus on the dismissal of prime ministers, but this time New Zealand was omitted from the subject countries (Weller, 1994).

## 1) The vulnerability of party leaders

### A. Timing

Theoretically, the vulnerability of party leaders is to a considerable extent determined by rules and procedures. While the provision of the rules which allow leadership change may serve to weaken incumbency, their absence may unduly prolong the tenure of incumbent leaders (providing they are healthy and willing) (Alderman and Smith, 1990: 270-271). Timetabled, automatic re-selection no doubt increases the incumbents' vulnerability, but it does not automatically put the leaders in immediate danger. As Weller noted, prime ministers with regular performance assessment can use such timetables to their advantage:

Rules predetermine available opportunities and, almost certainly exclude other processes of persuasion. If the rules prescribe a timetable, a Prime Minister under pressure can always point to the scheduled period and advise critics to wait for the opportunity and then use it. (Weller, 1994: 138)

Any successful leader can undergo difficult periods during their tenure. The statistical chances of such troubles coinciding with re-selection can be small, and if the timing of re-selection is pre-arranged, leaders can utilise their resources to manipulate the political environment to ensure there be no such coincidence. The most vulnerable leaders are those in 'open season' (Weller, 1994: 138), ie., they are subject to the rules allowing leadership challenge at any given time.

### B. The difficulty of challenges

Theoretically, the rules determine not only the timing and opportunities for challenges, provided they are adhered to, but also the level of difficulties (and thus the vulnerability of the incumbents) of those challenges. At least three factors are considered to be important. Firstly, who the selectors are can influence incumbents' vulnerability. Leaders may be selected by: a) a small group of party elites (as in the British Conservative Party until 1965); b) the parliamentary party (MPs) (as in the British Labour Party until 1980 and the British Conservative Party from 1965 until 1998); c) an electoral college consisting of various sections of the party (as in the British Labour Party since 1988); or d) party members at large (as with British Liberals<sup>34</sup>). Exclusive rights by one segment of a party (eg., MPs) to choose the party leader does not necessarily mean the selectors do not take the views of other segments of the party (eg., rank and file members) into consideration. However, it is important to remember that

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<sup>34</sup> As a result of the rule changes in 1998, the British Conservative Party now also allows the entire party membership to have a say in deciding the leadership of the parliamentary party. However, ordinary members' participation is limited to the final stage of selections, after members of parliament have narrowed down contenders to two (Alderman, 1999).

they do not *need* to do so, and this can easily lead to the latter's demands for inclusion in the selection process (Alderman, 1992: 34-35). In general, the more diverse and the larger the number of the selectors, the more difficult it becomes to organise challenges and the less vulnerable incumbents are likely to be (Weller, 1985: 63).

Secondly, the rules define the eligibility of both challenges and challengers. For example, the 1991 revisions of the rules of the British Conservative Party stripped away the secrecy hitherto given to the two members who nominated and seconded challengers. As a result, their names were to be published and anyone who wished to initiate removal of party leaders had to risk becoming the target of potential retribution. The clear aim of this revision was to discourage challenges while increasing the security of an incumbent leader (Alderman, 1992: 31)<sup>35</sup>. Similarly, the higher the number of nominations required by the rules as a pre-requisite for a challenge, the more difficult it is likely to be to unseat an incumbent leader. As Alderman reported, the required nomination threshold for the British Labour Party (in written form by 20% of all MPs) has deprived some challengers of chances to enter the contests (1994: 20). Also, at a more fundamental level, the eligibility of candidates can be restricted to a certain group of individuals. Commonly, to be a leader of parliamentary party, a candidate is required to be the incumbent member of a parliament representing the party.

Thirdly, rules define victories. In some cases, a victor needs to achieve an overall majority of the total votes. For the British Labour Party's case, until one candidate accomplishes this, ballots are repeated, with the bottom candidate being eliminated after each round (Punnet, 1992: 108). Prior to the recent revision of the rules, the British Conservative Party had employed noticeably more complicated procedures. In order to claim victory on the first ballot, a candidate was required to gain not only an overall majority of the votes of those entitled to vote (not just those who actually voted) but also a lead over the second candidate which amounted to at least 15% of those entitled to vote. If any candidate failed to achieve that, a second ballot would be called. It would be a new contest; the candidates for the first ballot were required to be re-nominated if they wished to remain in the contest (or they could withdraw) and new contenders were allowed in. The winner of the second ballot required an overall majority, as the 15% rule was applicable only to the first round. If there was no winner in the second round, there would be a third ballot between the top two candidates from the second ballot<sup>36</sup>. The

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<sup>35</sup> Under the new rule, a challenge to the leadership must be initiated with a vote of confidence, which may be held at any time. While no less than 15% of members of the parliamentary party's support is necessary for such a vote to take place, the identities of instigators will remain anonymous. If the incumbent fails to win that vote by securing a simple majority (the 15% rule no longer applies), all aspiring candidates are required to enter a subsequent leadership contest. To enter the race, one requires a proposer and a seconder, whose names are to be published. See Alderman (1999).

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of the rules and procedures of the major British political parties, see Punnet (1992 and 1993) as well as Alderman (1994 and 1999).



necessity to win 'convincingly' by clearing the 15% threshold set a high hurdle for Margaret Thatcher who, despite falling only four votes short of fulfilling the requirement, was forced to withdraw from the second ballot in 1990 (Cowley, 1996).

### 1) The status of incumbents

Not surprisingly, the security of party leaders increases while they are prime ministers (Weller, 1985: 47). To even consider unseating a leader, the political situation must be desperate as the effects of a leadership challenge is considered negative for its unwelcome yet inevitable exposure of internal divisions (Alderman and Smith, 1990; Punnet, 1992; Weller, 1985: 67)<sup>37</sup>. Although such divisions can still be fatal to the electoral fortune of opposition parties, they - in comparison to governing parties - have less at stake and fewer ramifications are expected from the removal of the leader. Also as Weller asserted, 'they [opposition leaders] have fewer resources, less prestige and less patronage; they do not have the same national stature as prime ministers' (1985: 44). With regard to patronage, while the opposition leader can still sanction disloyal colleagues through demotion in ranking, it is no comparison to what is available to prime ministers. Alderman and Smith described that position as 'probably the most potent resource available' for which '[p]otential conspirators could be deterred by fear of loss of office or failure to gain promotion' (1990: 269). Also, prime ministers can manipulate cabinet reshuffles to their advantage (Alderman and Smith, 1990: 269-279). They can be used for breaking up alliances against the incumbents, burying potential rivals in heavy workloads so that little time is left for plotting, and finally nurturing more than one credible candidate, which in turn encourages division among conspirators.

### 2) The availability of alternative candidates

The fate of incumbent leaders is considerably affected by the presence or absence of alternative leaders. In Weller's words, '[n]o leader can be replaced by a vacuum' (1985: 68). Although politicians are often uniformly assumed to be upwardly ambitious (Rohde, 1979), only few actually have the necessary abilities and talents to reach the top. If there are no alternative leaders who are acceptable to many segments of the party, it is less likely that unseating of an incumbent takes place. Thus, from the incumbents' viewpoint, it is tempting to utilise the power available to deter the emergence of such candidates, as mentioned above.

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<sup>37</sup> Contrary to this traditional view, Stark has claimed that leadership contests are 'good' for a political party for the opportunities which they create to 'remake its images', 'to display its leading talents, show its maturity, and demonstrate its worthiness to govern' (1996: 164).

### 3) What selectors seek in new leadership.

Stark (1996: Chapter 7) listed three criteria for assessing leadership regardless of the selectorate. They were:

#### A. Party unity

The first consideration is the candidates' ability to unify the party. Although this criterion is more like a pre-requisite, and is not always explicit, when the party faces a serious danger of disunity, it comes to the surface. If a party is in crisis, the victorious candidate is the one who is acceptable to many segments of the party even if that means a compromise.

#### B. Electoral appeal

Winning an election and leading the party to power is normally regarded as the most prominent task for the party leader, and the prospect of his/her success at the task greatly determines his/her fate. For this reason, it is considered highly unlikely that a party leader who has just won an election will face a challenge (Weller, 1985: 67).

Although the leader is held accountable for his/her party's poor showing in the polls, the leader's personal fate is considered safe as long as his/her personal rating runs ahead of the party (Alderman and Smith, 1990: 268).

#### C. Competence

The third criterion is a candidate's competence as a potential prime minister to govern the country. Included in the calculation of competence are his/her intelligence, ability to implement party policies, and general parliamentary skills.

These three criteria are not rated with equal weight. The first and second factors easily outweigh the last criterion, and often competence is readily sacrificed when the selectorate is faced with the task of prioritising the criteria. Although candidates' unifying power and electability are both regarded as imperative, in Stark's view, the ability to preserve party unity is normally given priority over the other (1996: 126). However, acceptability to many segments of a broadly based political party (such as the subjects of Stark's study) is not only a basic requirement for unification of the party, but also a sound measurement of a leaders' acceptability by the whole electorate in general elections. As Stark himself admitted (1996: 126), it is only in 'extraordinary circumstances' that a candidates' party-unifying ability becomes the explicit, paramount concern in a leadership selection. Under normal situations, unity concern can be regarded more as a pre-requisite, an inseparable part of the victory goal<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Unlike Stark, King suggested that in Britain selectors' criteria ranking varies according to the proximity of the next election: 'the more closely related the selection of candidates and party leaders is

## New Zealand

As noted in previous British studies, the chances of a move to unseat an incumbent party leader in New Zealand materialising is influenced by the leader's status. Not surprisingly, if leaders have just won an election, their positions are considered much more secure (Jackson, 1992b: 14-15; Upton, 1997). Although the vulnerability of opposition leaders is generally considered higher than that of prime ministers (Jackson, 1992a: 21), there are further variables that need to be considered. Firstly, if leaders are yet to win an election (including cases in which they inherit the prime ministership following the predecessors' resignation or death), the first one to two years of their tenure are a crucial period for establishing their leadership (1992b: 15-16). Secondly, an election loss itself is not a sufficient condition for leadership change. The performance of the party at the poll (eg., the magnitude of the loss, and its comparison to its performance at the previous election) also carries weight in determining the worth of the leader. Also important is the performance of the party in opposition following an election defeat. As long as the party shows promise of winning the next election under the existing leader, s/he is likely to be retained. In other words, leaders are punished for their perceived incapability of winning a future election, not for having lost one. For the same reason, the leaders who have proven successful at the previous elections may not be able to rely on their past records for their survival, once they are considered by the selectorate as a future electoral liability.

The availability of alternative candidates is another imperative. As reported in previous international studies, suitable and readily acceptable alternative candidates are not something which can be taken for granted. A unique mixture of talents and skills required for the party leadership are hard to find despite the abundance of 'wannabes'<sup>39</sup>.

What are the qualities sought in (potential) leaders? Jackson's findings (1992a: 28) on the selection criteria for future leaders in New Zealand closely paralleled Stark's list, which is earlier mentioned. A successful party leader in New Zealand needs to provide:

- 1) Elective: political success in the form of likely victory or improved performance of the party at general elections (as monitored by the opinion polls)

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to the holding of popular elections, the more likely it is that the selectors will have electoral criteria in mind' (1975: 188)

<sup>39</sup> A former National Cabinet Minister, Simon Upton, wrote: 'In truth, I think every MP who arrives in Wellington believes he or she could, given a fair wind and 64 lucky breaks, do the job... I have been in Parliament 16 years and seen an awful lot of pretenders. Very few have what it takes. From what I have seen since 1981, there's about one arrival per decade who has what it takes' (1997).

- 2) Policy: s/he should be capable of ensuring a degree of ideological satisfaction for party members.<sup>40</sup>
- 3) Unity: related to this is the ability to ensure party unity.

Among these three criteria, electoral victory is considered the first and uttermost priority in assessing the relative merits of leadership candidates in New Zealand. Although the image of party unity and cohesion has been long regarded as important in New Zealand politics, it has been argued so in the sense that the lack of them is detrimental to political parties' electoral fortune (eg., Jackson, 1987: 58). That is not to say, as Stark argued, a candidate's electoral appeal has never been compromised for the sake of another contender's perceived ability to restore the sense of unity and stability (Jackson, 1991: 52). However, even in that case - Labour's leadership change in 1989 - it was generally estimated that the united image of the party, projectable under Geoffrey Palmer's leadership (rather than the rival, Mike Moore's populist appeal) was the necessary remedy to the party's steady decline in popular support following a long and bruising internal battle. To demonstrate that the unity goal is secondary to the victory concern, the axe relentlessly fell on Palmer and his presumed stabilising ability to make a way for Moore some seven weeks before the 1990 election. As McRobie put it:

If a leader fails to inspire the electorate (regardless of how he is seen by his parliamentary colleagues) moves will inevitably be made to oust him (McRobie, 1991: 61).

#### B. Studies of individual leadership changes

The second type of party leadership selection study is more 'micro' in comparison to the first type of studies. It has tried to explore 'why' particular leadership changes originate and develop as they do, by examining variables beyond the systematic characteristics of the selection rules and procedures. As Weller indicated (1994: 138), institutional variables (ie., rules, procedures, and the availability of alternative candidates) are necessary but are not in themselves sufficient conditions for leadership changes. In order to topple incumbent leaders successfully, there needs to be an 'organisation of discontent', or motives for wanting fresh leaders. This group - which includes studies by Alderman (1996 and 1998), Alderman and Carter (1991, 1993 and 1995), Jesse (1996), Norton (1990a, 1990b, and 1993) - examined a wide range of 'contextual' (as opposed to 'institutional') variables such as the leader's personality, tactical decisions during the contests, the leaders and parties' standing in the opinion polls, the state of the

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<sup>40</sup> This second criterion of Jackson's appears to be similar to Stark's competence criterion. Elsewhere Jackson asserted that a successful leader requires an ability to 'outwit skilful rivals in political tactics', 'mould a team' and 'carry the myriad of detailed burdens associated with running executive government' (Jackson, 1992b: 17). For the National Party leaders' required qualities, see Upton (1997).

economy, successes or failures of policies implemented by a leader if the party is in government, and the leader's relationship with colleagues.

### New Zealand

In New Zealand (for both Labour and National), probably as a reflection of a shortage of case studies, leadership change has been mostly explained from the institutional perspective. Put simply, new leaders are wanted when incumbents can no longer satisfy one or a combination of the three criteria earlier noted by Jackson. The key factors which precipitate dissatisfaction among the selectorate are: a) 'perceived lack of probable electoral success at the next election'; b) 'the availability of an alternative leader who appears capable of an improved performance'; c) the performance of the leader in parliament with consequent effects upon the morale of parliamentary colleagues; and d) differences over policy (Jackson, 1992b: 18). In addition, similar to the British findings, external factors such as the size of caucus, the effectiveness of opposition parties, and the condition of the economy are all believed to affect the assessment of incumbent leaders (Jackson 1992b: 6) presumably through their influence in the opinion polls.

Non-institutional factors too can play a significant role in leadership change. Jackson's earlier study on the 1974 leadership change in National highlighted the importance of the personalities of the contenders and tactical decisions (or mistakes) made by the opposing camps (1975). With regard to the importance of personal characteristics, Gustafson asserted that apart from intelligence and physical energy, there are some other attributes that are typically necessary to become a party leader. Included in his list are: a) 'the compulsive personal ambition to lead'; b) 'the dogged persistence to strive year after year for that goal'; c) 'the personality and ability to construct, maintain and utilise networks'; d) 'the strength to rise above setbacks and disappointments'; and e) 'the single-mindedness... to devote almost every waking hour to politics' (Gustafson, 1997b: 131)<sup>41</sup>.

In his recent study, Jackson summarised the reasons for the demise of a short-term National leader, who lost the leadership within two years of the attainment as threefold: 1) he failed to establish himself as a strong political figure in the opinion polls; 2) he failed to display strong leadership skills to handle a vocally disgruntled former leader; 3) misjudged policy positions and isolated senior MPs who disagreed with his favoured policies (1992a: 26-27). The role the opinion polls play has been considered

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<sup>41</sup> See, also, Bassett (1999) for a list of 'essential' qualities for 'successful leadership' in New Zealand politics.

significant in determining party leaders' fate, although their accuracy in reflecting the electorate's views has been questioned (McRobie, 1991<sup>42</sup>). Henderson stated:

The reassurance that caucus will be seeking is that its leader is likely to be able to deliver electoral victory. The measuring rod for such a judgement is public opinion, as measured by the various party and media opinion polls (Henderson, 1997: 73).

### Critics of previous studies

There is no doubt that previous studies have contributed considerably towards our understanding of leadership change and leadership duration. However, there are some problems, especially regarding the absence of theories that link and integrate both institutional framework and individual, contextual variables.

In relation to the second type of studies that we have examined, there are critics of its *ad hoc* nature. Martin J. Smith argued in his analysis of Margaret Thatcher's resignation, that this approach tends to 'provide a narrative rather than an explanation, and even when the explanation is provided they focus on the events immediately surrounding the resignation' of the leader. As a result, they have failed to distinguish those variables as either 'a cause of the downfall' or 'factors that enabled Mrs Thatcher to be removed from office' (1994: 350).

Smith's criticism was directed at the analysis of Thatcher's resignation, but is applicable to the studies of this type in general. It is a realistic expectation that any leadership change takes place due to multiple variables, and to oversimplify causal factors risks distorting the picture. However, a mere aggregate of seemingly relevant causes does not contribute to systematic understanding or theorising of the subject, either. There is little doubt contextual variables affect the relationship between leaders and followers, but as Smith pointed out, their effects should not be seen as equal - some variables are more crucial than others. Also, although each variable may be independent of each other, they all work within the given, uniform institutional framework ('factors that enable leaders to be removed from office') which may regulate how contextual variables are channelled into actual leadership selection/de-selection consideration. Without including the institutional aspects in the equation, it is impossible to correctly evaluate the significance of individual factors, however relevant and important they seem.

Smith's criticism also seems to extend to the institutionalists' rigid approach for failing to recognise the fluid nature of power. He emphasised that the institutional framework which determines the availability of 'resources' operates in relation to

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<sup>42</sup> McRobie also questioned the widely spread belief (especially among MPs) as to leadership and electoral fortune. His conclusion was at best cautious. For a similar view, see Jackson (1991). Bean (1993), however, claimed that there is a more positive correlation between the two variables.

contextual factors. Smith argued that the power in the British Government is not attributable solely to either the Prime Minister or Ministers, but it is shared by both, which makes their relationship co-dependent. Power - capacity to use resources (patronage, authority etc. for PM; policy networks, political support etc. for Ministers) - is relational and, although some circumstances and situations (such as a massive electoral victory) allow the Prime Minister almost free and full usage of the resources, those circumstances can change as they eventually did for Margaret Thatcher. By the time she was challenged by Michael Heseltine in 1990, she had already undermined her position by alienating her Cabinet colleagues, to whom she could have turned to for support in a time of crisis, through a series of poor tactical and policy decisions. The true cause of her downfall therefore, according to Smith, was her failure to recognise her dependence on the Cabinet support. To mobilise support among her selectorate (ie., Conservative MPs), attainment of full Cabinet support was first required, but was not forthcoming.

Smith's contribution is especially valuable for studies of leadership durability in the sense that it has brought our attention to the previous institutional studies' problem regarding how to reconcile individual and contextual variables with their findings on the systems. However, Smith's theory has problems in two areas. Firstly, it is unclear whether his theory can be applicable to party leadership in opposition, which presents a particular concern for a study such as this. Does opposition party leadership have a similar dependence upon senior colleagues such as those in shadow cabinets? Or, does the status of a party (whether in government or opposition) alter the dynamics of leadership durability fundamentally? Due to his sole concentration on prime ministership, we do not know the answers to these questions.

The second problem is probably more serious. Smith appeared unwittingly to make the same mistake as the traditional institutional analyses with his fundamental assumption about how contextual variables affect the 'fluidity' of leadership support. In developing the analytical frameworks, the institutionalists have seemed to accept the rational choice theory views (Downs, 1957) which regard the selectorate (in Smith's case Cabinet Ministers) as consumers who shift their currency (allegiance) between commodities (leadership contenders) as they see more benefit with the same degree of freedom and willingness. This is a highly convenient and useful assumption which enables generalisation of leadership change, which in turn makes predictions based upon institutional settings possible. The question we need to address is: Does the selectorate actually behave in that manner? For example, if Thatcher's neglect of her cabinet colleagues was so detrimental to her leadership, why did some key cabinet ministers including John Major and Douglas Hurd remain loyal to her even to the extent that they ruled out their candidacy while she remained in the contest? How can we account for

this different loyalty level among the Thatcher's ministers who served under the same leader?

### **An alternative model of leadership change**

What appears to be lacking in previous studies is the realisation that: 1) leadership is dependent upon followers who have the power to select/de-select their leaders; 2) both leaders and followers work within the given institutional framework; 3) individual and contextual factors affect followers' views on their leaders; and 4) the extent to which followers' views are affected varies among individuals. What is in need is a theory of leadership durability that recognises all these points.

American psychologists, Edwin P. Hollander and James W. Julian (1969) in their influential study on leadership pointed out thirty years ago that leadership is an interactive *process* of three elements: 1) leaders' characteristics; 2) followers' perceptions of the leaders; and 3) the characteristics of the situation. Their approach (termed 'transactional models') sharply contrasted the then prevailing view on leadership (referred to as 'trait approach') which regards leadership as a *person*, which can be analysed through an examination of a leader's personality traits (Hollander, 1985). The trait approach assigned followers only a passive and insignificant role, while directing little attention to contextual factors. As already discussed, the institutionalists' approach to political leadership change is somewhat similar to such a view in the sense that both consider leadership a one-way interaction; if leaders maintain their performance to a certain standard, which is implied to be 1) measurable by an objective scale and 2) stable over time and applicable across situations, they can retain their positions.

However, such an approach seems erroneous<sup>43</sup>. Firstly, followers' are not confined to the passive role of observing their leaders. Based on the belief that 'our understanding of leadership is incomplete if we do not recognize its unity with followership' (Hollander, 1992a: 74), Hollander went on to indicate:

Leadership is not something a leader possesses so much as a process involving followership. Without followers, there plainly are no leaders or leadership. Yet, far less attention has been given to followers, who accord or withdraw support to leaders. Much of the literature on the study of leadership, while ostensibly focused on the effects of the leader, neglects to acknowledge or even recognize the important role of followers in defining and shaping the latitudes of a leader's action. (Hollander, 1993: 29)

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<sup>43</sup> Criticism of such a static approach to the leader-follower relationship is not new. See, for example, Bion (1961). Several political scientists have raised this point, too. See, for example, Barber (1992), and Henderson (1980). Also, although from a different perspective, Miroff (1993) explored the delicate relationships between leaders and followers in the context of American democracy.



Secondly, through the two-way leader-follower interaction, different assessments of leaders' performance are likely to be formed amongst followers, possibly according to how they interact with leaders. Therefore, it is possible that even if some followers change their views of their leaders, others may decide to adhere to their original views.

The notion that followers can affect and constrain a leader's activity (Hollander 1992a) and his/her influence over them (Pfeffer, 1977) is manifest in cases of elected political leaders. Leaders can maintain their positions only as long as a sufficient number of followers routinely support them. Leaders need to be *perceived* by their followers as effective leaders by constantly satisfying their expectations and demands. In the leader-follower relationship, a leader provided 'a resource in terms of adequate role behaviour directed toward the group's goal attainment' (Hollander and Julian, 1969: 388) and in return receives from followers 'heightened esteem for and responsiveness to the leader' (Hollander, 1992b: 48). In other words, leaders and followers are interlocked in 'reciprocal systems requiring synchronization' (Hollander, 1992b: 46). This aspect of leadership has been often overlooked by previous studies of leadership change<sup>44</sup>.

The transactional approach also clarifies the ambiguous position which contextual variables have been long given by the institutional approach of leadership studies - one of the problems raised by Smith earlier. As Fillmore Sanford stated: 'Not only is it the follower who accepts or rejects leadership, but it is the follower who perceives both the leader and the situation and reacts in terms of what he [sic] perceives' (1950: 4, cited by Hollander, 1985: 502). In other words, contextual and individual factors do not directly affect leadership, nor can their significance to leaders' positions be measured objectively and independently. Their importance and relevance to leaders are subjectively perceived and judged by followers, and in terms of leadership change, contextual factors are significant only to the extent which they affect followers' perceptions of leaders. According to this view, the effectiveness of leadership (and leaders' durability) cannot be measured by the 'objective' standardised scale. Even when leaders' performance output remains steady, followers may well judge their effectiveness differently under different circumstances. Similarly, even under the same circumstances, it is plausible to expect followers to exhibit diverse evaluation of their leaders' performance among themselves.

Although not linked to the transactional model of leadership, Philip Norton's analysis of Thatcher's leadership loss (1990a, 1990b, and 1993) resonates its fundamental approach. Instead of adopting the rational-choice-assumption, he

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<sup>44</sup> As earlier discussed, Smith pointed out that prime ministers and cabinet ministers are dependent on each other in Britain. However, in theory, the loss of support among cabinet ministers who constitute a small portion of the whole parliamentary party should not directly lead to a prime ministers' demise unless it is proved that cabinet ministers have control over the rest of parliamentary party members.

categorised all the Conservative MPs into four main and seven sub-groups mainly according to their ideological stances in an effort to explain the former Prime Minister's support strength within the party (Norton, 1990a). They were:

#### Thatcherites

- (1) Neo-liberals. A belief in the rigorous application of market forces. A rejection of the benign influence of government in economic affairs and in social affairs. Generally but not exclusively opposed to the EC and hanging. Generally supportive of more open government.
- (2) Tory Right. A greater emphasis on morals and the need to maintain social order and discipline. Strong belief in the maintenance of law and order. Pro-hanging. Supportive of legislation to embody social values. Generally opposed to open government.

#### Party Faithful

- (3) Thatcher Loyalists. Attachment to the style of leadership offered by Mrs Thatcher, with no strong ideological commitment.
- (4) Party Loyalists. Loyal to the party rather than to any particular strand of thought within the party. Loyalty on particular issues cannot necessarily be taken for granted - the group harbours a number of mavericks and free-thinking MPs - but loyalty will flow to the leader, albeit on a contingent basis. As long as the leader provides competent - and successful - leadership, with consequent electoral appeal and reward, the loyalty is maintained; if the leader falters, Members start to waver.

#### Populists

- (5) Populists. So-labelled not because of their style but because they reflect most accurately the position taken by the majority of the population, i.e., essentially right-wing on law-and-order issues (pro-hanging, tougher sentencing, anti-immigration), generally left-wing on social and economic issues (pro-health service, emphasis on creating jobs rather than keeping prices down). Sceptical of or opposed to EC. Some scepticism about privatisation.

#### Critics

- (6) Wets. Essentially a combination of traditional and progressive conservatives. Committed to the concept of "One Nation". Stress need to maintain stability and a harmony of relationships between governors and governed. Hence accept the need, as occasion demands, for government intervention. Strongly pro-EC. Opposed to cuts in public expenditure, the poll tax, health charges, reductions in child benefit and the death penalty.
- (7) Damps. Generally sympathetic to the stance of the Wets, but not as rigorous in opposing the government on the issues on which the Wets take a stand. Pro-EC and generally anti-hanging, sympathetic to government intervention. Likely but not certain to oppose the poll tax and health charges. More amenable than the wets to persuasion by ministers and the Whips on particular issues. (Norton, 1990: 49-50)

The validity of Norton's typology lies in its recognition of the realistic nature of selectors' leadership support. It recognised that support fluidity (or stability) varied from one member to another according to *why* they supported the leader. For example, the first two groups, Neo-liberals and Tory Right (combined, Norton labelled them as 'Thatcherites'), supported Thatcher for her policy stances. Thus, once she started to deviate from 'Thatcherism', their support would no longer be reliable. Adherence to her ideological purity was the key to sustaining these groups' support. On the other hand,

the group referred to by Norton as 'Thatcher Loyalists' were regarded as being committed to Thatcher as a person and her leadership style, and their support for her could be counted upon even in the event of any policy deviation. The Party Faithfuls' loyalty was principally directed at the party and its electoral victory, and their loyalty to a leader was secondary. They would support Thatcher as long as she could prove her worth as the leader. However, once she displayed a sign of weakness, they would shift their allegiance to another candidate under whom the party's prospect seemed brighter. In this sense, the Party Loyalists are similar to the image which rational-choice theorists developed for voters<sup>45</sup>; their loyalty to a leader was contingent and fragile. The Populists and the Critics (the Wets and the Damps) were critical of Thatcher's leadership for her policies and/or personal styles, and Thatcher could not rely upon them for support under normal circumstances.

Using this categorisation, Norton estimated that more than half (58%) of the British Conservative MPs at the time of the 1990 leadership change belonged to the Party Faithful (1993: 35). He then concluded that this high proportion of Party Faithful (who later changed their views of Thatcher) ultimately cost her the leadership (Norton, 1990b and 1993).

Norton's typology was designed only to describe the Thatcher administration and he has never claimed its validity outside this immediate subject (thus he may be guilty of Smith's criticism of being ad hoc). However, the implications of his classification appear to have far-reaching value to studies of leadership durability in wider contexts. Those implications can be summarised in the following terms:

- 1) Where a political party leader is selected by (a group of) selectors, survival of leadership is dependent upon the selectors' perceptions of (and support for) the leader.
- 2) Selectors' perceptions of the leader are unlikely to be uniform. They are more likely to differ from one member to another, reflecting their individual beliefs, values, assessment of the given situation, etc.
- 3) Consequently, selectors' stances towards the leader, ie, a) whether they support her/him or not; b) why they support/oppose him/her; and c) how strongly they support/oppose her/him, are likely to vary among them.
- 4) In this circumstance, leadership durability is likely to be influenced by the composition of selectors based upon their stances towards the leader.

Although promising, the applicability of Norton's classification in its original form to other leadership vulnerability studies is limited; his seven categories are far too many

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<sup>45</sup> From the rational choice viewpoint, Neal G. Jesse developed a similar concept for those who shift their leadership support to a winning candidate, whom he referred to as 'Hobbesian voter'. See Jesse (1996).

and too detailed as well as too case specific. For wider usage, his model needs to be simplified and be developed into a theory.

### **Leadership perception formation - information processing model**

The first step of theorisation is to find a guideline for the simplification. Where and how do we re-draw the lines between various types? For this, the study once again turns to the findings of psychology.

Industrial psychologists in the United States have long shown interest in leadership in (mainly business) organisations. Central to their view is the notion that in order to gain an understanding of the perceptions that followers hold of leaders, how followers process information is crucial (Lord and Maher, 1991).

Since people's memory and attention have distinct limitations, they develop 'hierarchically organized sets of information that enable us to process much more information than would be possible without these mental structures' (Lord and Maher, 1991: 17). This 'categorisation' process takes place in order to 'provide maximum information with the least cognitive effort' (Rosch, 1978: 28), and it is done so in terms of 'prototype' which represents 'clearest cases' or 'best examples' (Rosch, 1975: 544). Over time, people accumulate knowledge about attributes which are most widely, as well as least commonly, shared among category members. These attributes become associated with one another and finally form an integrated cognitive structure - prototype (Lord and Maher, 1991: 43) or ideal images of leadership.

Leadership prototypes contain information of the necessary attributes of leaders as well as of their expected performance guideline. Once prototypes are acquired, leadership perceptions are formed by perceivers (selectors) through examination of the matching degree between subjects and the prototypes. If the subjects exhibit a satisfactory level of matching, they are considered being leaders by the perceivers (Lord, De Vader, and Alliger, 1986; Fraser and Lord, 1987).

Although this leadership typology has been mainly utilised as a gauge for categorical judgement, ie, whether subjects are classified as leaders or non-leaders, its validity does not stop there. As Lord and his associates asserted, judgement on the proximity of the subjects to the prototype can be used for ranking among the subjects (Lord, Foti, and Phillips, 1982: 112-113). In a similar vein, Foti, Fraser, and Lord (1982) demonstrated that correlation exists between the levels of the match between subjects and ideal leadership images and endorsement of political leaders. In other words, the more 'prototypical' a political leader (or candidate) is perceived to be, the more strongly perceivers endorse that person. These results suggest that perceivers can determine preferability of leadership contenders based upon how similar individual contenders are to their ideal leadership images.

According to Hall and Lord, once formed in this manner, followers' perceptions of leaders are likely to 'remain relatively stable over time' (Hall and Lord, 1995: 279). However, if this is the case, why do some selectors change their allegiance from one candidate to another? One possible explanation, of course, is the availability of leadership contenders. Through a natural political cycle - in the medium to long term - individuals with good leadership credentials 'emerge'. Hitherto unknown MPs gain support as their abilities and attributes become acknowledged by their selectors. Perhaps those 'rising stars' were not available (or not considered by the selectors suitable - for example due to their lack of experience) at the time of the previous leadership selection where the incumbent was elected. If those newly available candidates show a closer prototype match than the existing leader, the selectors are sooner or later most likely to switch their support to the former.

However, change of allegiance can take place even in the short term with all the leadership candidates remaining the same from the previous selection. There are at least three possible explanations for this. First, some selectors may support one leadership candidate over another even when the second candidate's prototype match is higher than the first. This unlikely scenario may occur in a situation where a selector her/himself harbours a leadership ambition but feels that the timing is not right yet for his/her own candidacy. By selecting someone, who is not expected to be successful in the long-term, as a 'stop-gap' measure, s/he may be able to position him/herself for the next leadership selection. However, the risk of having a less likely successful leader can be high; the party may fare poorly at an election, which in turn may deprive not only the party of government but also the selector of a seat, if s/he is an MP.

Secondly, selectors may decide to change their positions towards the leader as a result of subsequent gaps between the initial prototypes and the leader's perceived behaviour. Such gaps can be created by several causes. Once being elected, the leader may deviate from the previous behaviour pattern, based upon which selectors formed their initial perceptions. Or, selectors' initial perceptions of the leader may experience later change. For example, selectors may have initially formed inaccurate pictures of candidates. This may be a problem particularly for selectors who are new to a party or the leader at the time of a leadership selection. Or, even if their perceptions of the leader are accurate, new selectors' ideal images of leadership may change after gaining experience in parliament. Either way, gaps between the leader's perceived behaviour and the (initial) prototypes will eventuate. If the selectors can find another candidate who fits their revised prototypes better, then their support is likely to shift to that person.

Thirdly, selectors' ideal leadership images do not necessarily consist of concrete personal traits and attributes in the form of prototypes. It has been indicated by some research that perceivers do not solely rely on the comparison between prototypes and

perceived behaviour as the basis for leadership perception formation. Although the prototype-perception match process is highly important in situations where direct and regular face-to-face contact is possible (Lord and Maher, 1991: 119), followers may alter their views according to information on performance of their organisations, for which leaders are held - either fairly or unfairly - responsible (Lord and Maher, 1991: 60-61). As leadership itself cannot be observed in a quantifiable manner, leaders' effectiveness and worth are often (especially where face-to-face contact is difficult due to the size of organisations) judged by the 'effects' of leaders' behaviour. These 'inferred' observations or a causal analysis - termed an 'attribution' process by Calder - can be used in the formulation of leadership perception (Calder, 1982). This process is not new to parliamentarians. Vulnerability of party leadership appears to be related to a party's performance at an election and at the opinion polls, where the effectiveness of leadership can be quantitatively measured. Given this, it is more than plausible to assume that some selectors may use inferential processes in making decisions on their leadership support by attributing a party's performance in those areas to the leadership.

What is required now is a model that can accommodate and explain these various types of formation processes of leadership support.

### **Lord and Alliger's Information Processing Models**

In 1985, Lord and Alliger suggested four separate information processing models (IPM) in their attempt to explain how recognition of leadership is formed in interaction behaviour in a small group problem-solving situation, using 147 university students as subjects. IPM1 posits that leadership perceptions are based solely on the frequency of information, or leaders' verbal activities. According to this model, the more oral communications followers have (either directly or indirectly), the higher leaders' recognition becomes. IPM2 suggests that perceptions of leadership are formed on the match of the target person to a prototype of the category leader. Here, a prototype of leadership is applicable over time, *regardless* of situations. IPM3 postulates that leadership perceptions depend upon social norms developed for a particular situation. As a consequence, IPM2 and IPM3 predict the emergence of different types of successful leadership; the former predicts a less flexible, more stereotypic leadership due to a universal subordinate conceptualisation of leadership, whereas the latter predicts a more flexible leadership style to accommodate different subordinate expectations across various situations. The final model, IPM4, suggests that normative definitions of leadership change relatively quickly over time within the same situations depending on how the demands of tasks are faced. According to this model, followers use the fit between leadership behaviour and task demands for formation of leadership perceptions. Leaders need to alter their behaviour even more quickly than IPM3 predicts since

acceptable behaviour changes according to given tasks. As both IPM3 and IPM4 consider leaders' effectiveness in dealing with situations and task demands, it is implied that causal analysis between leaders' behaviour and the group's goal attainment status may be employed in a more significant manner than prototype matching.

Lord and Alliger never claimed any relevance of their models to leadership perceptions in political organisations such as political parties. In fact, they have never attempted to repeat the test of their concept again, even in a laboratory situation for which these models were designed. This is perhaps due to the disappointing findings in the 1985 experiment, which strongly supported IPM1. However, their main concepts provide potentially useful guidance for this study, although some modifications need to be made to the models. The proposed alterations - in order to suit a study of political party leadership - are two-fold. They are: a) omitting IPM1 from our models; and b) merging IPM3 and IPM4.

#### a) Omitting IPM1

Although some studies also reported that it is quantity (not quality) that contributes most to formation of leadership perception among followers, as Sorrentino and Boutillier indicated (1975: 409-410), the findings require some caution due to the conditions under which the experiments were conducted. There are two reasons for concluding that IPM1 is inappropriate for the context of this study. Firstly, the activities in which leadership abilities were assessed were socioemotional (as opposed to task-oriented) in which maintenance of personal relationship is paramount for the job. Accordingly, motivation or willingness to contribute which was measured in quantity of interaction rather than the actual ability to contribute was more highly weighed in the judgement. In political party leadership selection, contenders must agree to make themselves available, and thus willingness should be a prerequisite rather than 'the' determinant factor.

Secondly, the experiments were conducted in one-off, limited time-frames. Lengthy and regular contacts (such as in political parties) are likely to shift the focus from 'willingness' to 'competence' of leadership contenders. In other words, a limited environment artificially increases the importance of 'willingness' as a leadership quality because assessors have limited clues to determine the subject's ability if his/her participation rate is low (Hollander and Julian, 1978: 160). (Assessors cannot tell if the subject participates less frequently because of a lack of ability or not.) Although quantity of contact is considered significant in the early stages of group development (Hollander and Julian, 1978: 160), whether raters continue to use it as the major scale for leadership ability, in the later stages, seems doubtful. If selectors are novices to a political party, the possibility cannot be ruled out that their decisions on the leadership are influenced by candidates' perceived willingness expressed through the number of

personal contacts they make. However, where the size of selectorate is small enough to enable every candidate to personally reach out to every selector (as in the NZLP), this is expected to be a minor factor. In this context, once again, candidates' abilities as a potential leader are likely to be measured by other gauges than the frequency of contacts.

#### b) Merging IPM3 and IPM4

The second alteration to Lord and Alliger's models made for this study is a merger of IMP3 and IMP4. As already described, the IPM3 and IPM4 share the core characteristic – flexibility and the absence of stable ideal leadership images. The difference between the two models is what necessitates re-configuration of prototypes. IPM3 suggests changing 'situations', whereas IPM4 postulates 'tasks'. A question arises regarding the virtue of this distinction in analysis of political party leadership.

In Lord and Alliger's experiment, the two 'tasks' given to the participants were completely independent from each other in terms of content and were conducted separately<sup>46</sup>. Of course, politics does not operate in such a tidy manner. Tasks party leaders have to deal with are often inter-woven with one another. Leaders have to face multiple tasks simultaneously, and many of those tasks are continuous by nature without neat solutions/conclusions. Given this, it seems erroneous to presume that selectors would form and alter their ideal images of leadership according to individual tasks in actual politics.

However, political leaders' roles are by no means static. The status of a party (whether in government or in opposition as well as whether the party is likely to win the next election or not) is likely to affect what leaders are expected to do. Similarly, the position in time – or more precisely in an election cycle – may influence behaviours of party leaders. These factors seem not only to assign different tasks to leaders but also to change emphases or priorities of the existing leadership tasks. It seems more than reasonable to expect some selectors to change their perceptions of leaders according to how they handle new and/or highlighted tasks, as suggested by IPM3. Nevertheless, those changes are induced by changing *situations* – as postulated in IPM3. Therefore, it seems sensible to merge those two types.

#### Propositions

This study proposes that there are two types of support the leader receives, based upon which, together with opposition, selectors can be categorised into three groups.

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<sup>46</sup> In task 1, the participants were required to make five equal squares from 20 pieces of geometrically shaped coloured poster-board in as little time as possible. For task 2, they were asked to arrange nine cards in a predetermined 3-by-3 matrix. See, Lord and Alliger (1985: 51-52).



## Support Types

Type 1: (*Positive support*) A leader is supported by followers because s/he (approximately) fits their ideal leadership image (prototype). This image deals with fundamental characteristics of a leader such as her/his personality, general leadership skills, ideological stances<sup>47</sup>, and general perspective on politics ('world view' in Barber's (1992) terms). This type of support is expected to remain relatively stable across situations and over time. As the prototype covers a wide range of leadership definitions, it is unrealistic to expect any leader to perfectly satisfy the ideal leadership images.

However, to gain this type of support from followers, the congruence of a leader's characteristics and the prototype needs to be sufficiently strong. To make a judgement on the leader/prototype match, followers require sound knowledge of the leader, which can only be accumulated over a period of time. New selectors may be excluded from forming this type of support since they have not had time to acquire such knowledge<sup>48</sup>. Similarly, this support is less likely to be found in a large selectorate with limited access to the leader. Mathematically, the larger the selectorate becomes, the less contact with the candidates is likely<sup>49</sup>.

Probably, *positive* support is akin to 'personal loyalty' to a leader in general terms. The 'Thatcher Loyalists' and (to a less extent) 'Thatcherites' in Norton's categorisation typify those who hold this support.

Type 2: (*Non-committal support*) Followers base their support for a leader on their suitability to given political situations. Unlike *positive* support, leaders' desired qualities are likely to be perceived by followers in the context of the given situation, rather than as 'desirable absolutely' (Hollander, 1992b: 44). Selectors who possess this type of support may also use 'attribution

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<sup>47</sup> Maurer and his associates reported that while those politically involved are likely to support candidates with similar views on the issues, politically less involved individuals tend to base their support on candidates' general likeability (Maurer et. al., 1993: 975). Although all politicians are politically 'involved', their depth of interest in issues greatly differs. Thus, it is not unrealistic to assume that those committed in terms of policies (for whom issues matter) are more likely to give weight to leadership candidates' policy stances. If ideological stances are a major concern for the electors, the leader's perceived level of commitment to and his/her effectiveness as an advocate of the particular views may well constitute the basis of their support of the person.

<sup>48</sup> This assumption is based upon the Lord and Maher position: 'we would expect experts [experienced caucus members] and novices [caucus new comers] to differ substantially in the amount and structure of underlying knowledge about leadership, as well as to exhibit qualitative differences in leadership perception processes' (1991: 35)

<sup>49</sup> Of course, one may correctly argue that it is not the sizes of the selectorate that matters. Regardless of the sizes, the selectorate needs either formal or informal settings for selectors to familiarise themselves with leadership candidates.

processes' in their evaluation of leaders. For them, required normative perceptions alter when the surrounding political environment changes. Factors which may precipitate such changes include the party's losses (or gains) of office, the proximity of the next election, the party's standing in the opinion polls, and the personalities of opposition party leaders.

The 'Party Loyalists' - those whose primary loyalty goes towards the political party rather than the leader herself/himself (thus their support for a leader depends on his/her perceived utility to their party) and 'Populists' in Norton's study are assumed to have this type of support.

It is important to clarify one point regarding the nature of prototypes. Studies of leadership perceptions generally seem to assume ideal leadership images (prototype) which are relatively uniform, possibly formed 'through formal and informal socialisation' (Lord and Maher, 1991: 12) and held widely among followers. However, following Lord and Maher's suggestion (1991: 64), this study presumes that followers' prototypes, especially those for political leaders whose functions and responsibilities are more diverse and ambiguous than other sorts of leaders (such as business leaders), are different from one another. Although every caucus member wishes his/her leader to be decisive, considerate, organised, intelligent, eloquent, fair and telegenic, this hardly automatically leads to unanimous support for the victorious candidates in actual leadership selections. Why?

At least two explanations are possible. Firstly, even if every caucus member lists the same personal qualities as necessary variables, their interpretation of the variables and perceptions thereof in potential leaders may not be the same, as Maurer and his colleagues' study (1993) suggested<sup>50</sup>. For example, all the caucus members may expect 'fairness' from their leaders, but what 'fairness' means may differ among them. Similarly, it is quite possible that one leadership contender treats some caucus colleagues 'more fairly' than others. The first group of the caucus members, perhaps unaware of his/her treatment of the second group of fellow members, may genuinely rate such a candidate 'fair'. As Hollander and Julian argued, perceptions takes place in a subjective, not objective sense (1969). How diverse members' perceptions of one leader can be is subject to argument. As Hall and Lord put it (1995: 279):

although there may be characteristic differences *across* leaders that describe a central tendency, the same leaders perceive, and behave differently toward, different group members. That is, different followers are exposed to different perceptual targets even though they objectively have the same leader, because of

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<sup>50</sup> Their research on perceptions of American presidential candidates showed that different prototypes for an effective political leader were held according to the perceivers' party affiliations and political involvement, although the differences were not substantial (Maurer et al., 1993: 973-4).

their ingroup or outgroup status. Because followers likely share knowledge about how the leader treats them, the behaviours the leader directs toward one follower is likely to be evaluated in light of group context of the leader's behaviour toward other followers. [Emphasis original]

Secondly, even if all caucus members interpret desired leadership traits in the same manner, the chance of finding a person with all these traits in reality is low. Support for one politician over others, thus, is only achievable after inevitable trade-offs among the desired traits. In other words, Candidate A is preferred to Candidate B only in relative terms.

Cantor and Mischel (1979) rejected the traditional view that prototypes are a small set of equally important critical features that must be possessed by all members, and that a clear boundary between members and non-members can be drawn simply by the presence or absence of those features. Instead, they introduced the notion of 'a continuum of category membership' which assumes prototypes are a 'fuzzy category': members of the same prototype need to possess enough, not all, of the critical features which define membership, but how well they fit the prototype varies in degree (prototypicality). As a result, some members are 'clear, good central cases' while others may be 'ambiguous, borderline cases' (Cantor and Mischel, 1979: 8-13)<sup>51</sup>. This (realistic) possibility inevitably complicates the situation. Although ranking among members of the 'leaders' category is still possible, if leadership candidates display a different pattern of prototype fittings on various variables (eg., candidate A is strong on intelligence but weak on public appeal, while candidate B is strong on public appeal with weak organisation skills), judgement as to which leadership candidate is more suitable, may become troublesome. Every party leader – no matter how 'successful' they are – has some critics in her/his selectors. This rarity of unanimous support in political party leadership suggests that the trade-off criteria among (or the emphasis on) desirable leadership traits differs among selectors.

Based on the above typology of support, this study hypothesises that a party leadership selectorate can be categorised into three groups. They are: loyalists (based upon *positive* support); uncommitted supporters (based upon *non-committal* support); and opponents (with neither type of support).

- a) Loyalists are those who regard the leader (or the candidate) as the best person to lead the party. Their *positive* support is based upon a fundamental belief in his/her abilities, skills, and personal assets as a leader, and it is essentially independent of the availability of other alternative leaders as leadership contenders. Loyalists

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<sup>51</sup> However, Lord, Foti, and Phillips emphasised: 'even though leadership may be a fuzzy category, the distinction between the clearest or best leadership examples (ie., leadership prototypes) and nonleaders may still remain relatively clear' (Lord, Foti, and Phillips, 1982: 109).

genuinely share the view that if another person takes over the leadership, the party would be worse off. Although *positive* support is more stable than the other type of (*non-committal*) support, it can wane should the trust in the leader be breached by her/his behaviour which is antithetic to loyalists' leadership prototypes.

- b) Uncommitted supporters are selectors who do not have any specific loyalties to or firm support for any particular leadership contenders. Their *non-committal* support depends on the circumstances and rational calculation of the merit/demerit which different leaders can produce for them. Or, in the case of newer selectors, they may lack sufficient knowledge on contenders to make a firm judgement. Their support tends to shift among candidates, and can be easily lost and won back according to a change of circumstances.
- c) Opponents do not support the new leader under any circumstances, as they believe that s/he is not equipped with the right skills and/or personal qualities and characteristics. This type of selectors have serious doubts about the leader's suitability and believe that the party's interest would be better served under a different leader<sup>52</sup>

Before proceeding further, it seems important to note that there is a major difference between the above typology and Norton's categorisation. Unlike Norton's work, this study's typology bases the classification of MPs mostly on the strength of support they hold for the leader. As seen earlier, the basis of Norton's typology used for classification was mixed - ideological stances and personal attachment to the leader. Although his categorisation was no doubt effective in his study, his mixed criteria caused difficulties in classifying some cases, as they could belong to more than one group, according to Norton's own admission (1990a: 51). Also found troublesome by Norton (1990a: 51-52) was the fact that some MPs do not retain stable issue positions over time. What was made clear by his studies is that despite such a policy shift, the effectiveness of his categorisation remained intact, which in turn, may suggest that

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<sup>52</sup> One point needs to be clarified at this stage: although opponents will be analysed, the main focus of this study is supporters. One may argue – perhaps correctly - that if supporters are assumed to have varying degrees of reliability and susceptibility towards position changes, the same logic may be applicable to opponents. It is unrealistic to see opponents as a single entity with the uniform level of resentment towards the incumbent leader. A more realistic picture is that some of them are more susceptible to converting to supporters than others are. It is, therefore, possible to categorise opponents into several sub-groups according to their conversion difficulty. However, this study decides against such sub-categorisation for two reasons. First, it seems to complicate the typology unnecessarily. Second, where a leader is required to have a majority support for his/her selection, s/he can remain at the top if the original supporters are retained. Leaders do not lose their positions because they fail to cultivate more support from the original opponents. They do so principally because they lose support of the original supporters.

ideological stances as a classification category can be replaced by another criterion such as the strength of support for the leader - regardless of the reasons for the support.

From this study's perspective, the reasons for support are important only as an indicator as to what a leader can or cannot do before s/he starts losing his/her support in the selectorate. As is to be seen shortly, for an analysis of the vulnerability of a leader, what is important is the strength of his/her support within her/his selectorate. It may be possible to argue that dividing the support types according to the reasons for that support might increase the accuracy of the model's leadership vulnerability prediction capability, but it can only be achieved at the expense of simplicity which allows generalisation. It is also plausible that some selectors support the leader for a combination of reasons. In this case, for retention of support, the leader is required to satisfy those separate expectations simultaneously. Under this condition, determining at which point support is lost and in reaction to which leadership behaviour, becomes too complicated. Such a calculation seems to increase the model's particularity and that can only invite criticism of the model being 'ad hoc'.

### **The support reliability**

It is assumed in this study that the reliability of support from the leader's perspective varies considerably from one support type to another. It is necessary to provide a theoretical basis stating why it is supposed to be the case.

Where leadership support is formed based upon a high degree of prototype matching (positive support), the followers simultaneously set an expected appropriate behaviour/performance guideline for the new leader as well as for their own reaction to the leader (Lord, Foti, and De Vader: 1984). In analysing 'realistic job preview' experiments, Premack and Wanous (1985) revealed that realistic views of new jobs lower initial job expectations while increasing organisational commitment, job satisfaction, job survival, and performance. Since intimate knowledge and sound understanding of the leader is required to utilise the high prototype match as the main base for support, loyalists should have 'realistic views' of the new leader. Thus they are expected to have expectations which are likely to be fulfilled, and exhibit higher satisfaction with the leader. Stronger commitment and durable support of the leader are also likely.

Even if the leader fails to fulfil loyalists' expectations, instant erosion of support may not be the necessary consequence. The foundation of *positive* support is fundamental trust in the leader as a person. According to Hollander, with such trust comes 'idiosyncrasy credit', that determines the leader's latitude for deviation from normative behaviour, that would be seen as unacceptable by followers otherwise (Hollander, 1958). In the process of becoming the leader, a candidate gains acknowledgment of and

endorsement for her/his competence from his/her supporters. The more trust the person gains from the followers prior to her/his selection, the more idiosyncrasy credit s/he is accredited at the beginning of the leadership. The more idiosyncrasy credit s/he has, the greater deviation the leader is allowed from the followers' expectation. Idiosyncrasy credit, however, is not a warrant for endless latitude. Instead, it is consumed by all idiosyncratic behaviour and when the leader exhausts it, the followers trust in the leader will be also lost. For future deviating behaviour, the leader will have to re-earn her/his credit by meeting the followers' expectations first. Nevertheless, one thing seems clear - the higher the initial credit, the more reliable the followers' support for the leader. Since loyalists are assumed to have high credit for the leader, the leader can count upon their support with more confidence than any other groups.

The followers' closer support also means a greater sense of responsibility for and investment in the leader, which in turn creates a heightened psychological identification with him/her (Hollander and Julian, 1970, 1978). Based upon Hirschman's theoretical framework which was introduced to explain a decline of firms, organisations, and states (1970), Whitney and Cooper (1989) stated that a high level of emotional investment, commitment, and strong faith in the leader's ability, combined together, make 'exit' action (ie., flight for another leadership candidate) unlikely when things go wrong. Instead, good relationships, enjoyed in close allegiance with the leader, may encourage loyalists to 'voice' suggestions for performance improvement without fear of punishment, although this depends much upon the personalities of the leaders.

Besides, if one strongly supports the leader in a small group (such as in the NZLP caucus), that close allegiance sooner or later becomes common knowledge to all members including the leader and his/her rivals. Close association thus involves some risks in case of leadership change as the rival leader may well treat supporters of the former leader with suspicion, or even possible retribution such as denial of future promotion. This possibility is likely to make the caucus members face two options: either to stay neutral or align with a leadership candidate. If the latter option is chosen, one may have to make a total commitment to him/her.

*Non-committal* support, in contrast, is assumed to be more unreliable than *positive* support. Hollander and Julian's research (1970, 1978) unfolded the vulnerability of elected leaders (as opposed to appointed leaders) who fail to achieve the expected goals, especially if their competence is rated highly at the time of election. Elections tend to increase expectations for success or demands on a leader's roles by electors (Hollander and Julian, 1970: 55). Uncommitted supporters base their leadership preference on potential leaders' perceived ability to handle specific situational and task demands at a given time. The cost of any failure to fulfil these particular, possibly inflated expectations can prove to be costly. Unlike loyalists, the patience of uncommitted

supporters is not great. Judgement of personal incompetence and failure at the given tasks means the leader is 'guilty' (Hollander and Julian, 1970: 53)

From the leader-member-exchange (LMX) model perspective, the holders of *non-committal* support are more likely to be 'outgroup' members as opposed to the beholders of positive support who may be 'ingroup' members. Hall and Lord contended that:

Outgroup members, who are less likely to see themselves as similar to the leader, will attribute blame to the leader when negative events occur. Ingroup members, who see themselves as more similar to the leader, by contrast will be more likely to attribute negative outcomes externally, to chance or the situation. (Hall and Lord, 1995: 280)<sup>53</sup>

The aforementioned Hirschman's 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty' framework also suggests the unreliability of uncommitted supporters' support for the leader. In her study of corporate employees' decisions to remain in firms, Kathleen Cannings (1992) subdivided the 'loyalty' option into two groups. One was 'attachment' (a strong desire to remain attached to the company) and the other was 'commitment' (devotion of time and energy to the pursuit of corporate goals). With attachment, people remain in the current organisation simply because the cost of 'exit' is too high. At the same time, they are not prepared to make productive contributions for the firm. Cannings asserted that in order to transform attachment to commitment, the firm needs to provide employees with both the ability and willingness to exercise 'voice' to help the organisation achieve its goal (Cannings, 1992).

Although the relationship between the party leader and MPs is not identical with a company-employee relationship, comparison is still useful. Being outgroup members, probably they cannot expect either good promotion prospects (a low barrier to exit) nor a sympathetic ear of the leader for their concern and ideas (a lack of ability to exercise voice). In either case, these groups of MPs' support for the leader seems to be unreliable.

### **The leadership vulnerability**

Based upon the above propositions of the reliability of support, this study further proposes that it is possible to evaluate the vulnerability of the leader based upon the composition of the caucus members at the time of his/her selection. As is to be described shortly, the rule stipulates that to become a leader of the New Zealand Labour Party, a successful candidate must have numerical support (a clear majority) of the

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<sup>53</sup> In a similar vein, Calder also noted: 'It would seem very difficult to attribute leadership to someone whose goals run against one's own. On the other hand, the attribution of leadership would seem much easier if it facilitates attainment of one's goals' (1982: 202).

caucus. It seems apparent that if the new leader is selected by a slim majority, s/he is vulnerable to potential challenges. Nevertheless, even if the leader is selected with a comfortable majority, her/his tenure is not automatically assumed secure. To determine the durability and vulnerability of the leadership, one needs to examine not the size of majority of his/her victory, but the composition of his/her support base. For instance, if one's support mainly consists of loyalists, her/his position is safe even if his/her winning majority is not large. On the other hand, if the support base contains a large portion of uncommitted supporters, the leadership vulnerability increases accordingly, despite her/his possibly significant majority size.

### **What leaders need to do to retain their leadership**

It seems fair to assume that every leader wishes to strengthen his/her position during her/his leadership. Whatever the leader hopes to achieve in the top position – personal gains or certain policy goals – secure leadership is a prerequisite. Without it, the effectiveness of the leadership is seriously compromised.

In order to increase the stability of the leadership, the leader needs to increase the proportion of loyalists in the selectorate. As already noted, if the support base consists of a large proportion of uncommitted supporters (especially with a significant presence of opponents), his/her status as the leader is highly vulnerable. To accomplish the above goal, the leader needs to undertake three tasks simultaneously. While a) retaining loyalists' existing support, the leader needs to: b) convince uncommitted supporters that their reluctance is groundless and that s/he is a worthy leader; and finally c) convert opponents' opposition into support.

But how can the leader accomplish these tasks? Upon choosing the leader, all members of the selectorate – regardless of their positions – have views of the leader. Supporters (both loyalists and uncommitted supporters) harbour expectations for the new leadership. Opponents and uncommitted supporters have concerns about her/his ability and suitability as the person at the helm. To retain existing support, the leader has to meet the supporters' expectations so that their faith in him/her can be reassured. With regard to the concerns, the leader has to make an effort to alleviate them if s/he expects the doubters to alter their views of her/him.

Of course, these tasks can be achieved with varying degrees of difficulty. For example, retention of already solid support (by loyalists) is estimated to require less effort and time than convincing uncommitted supporters. The latter task should be easier than the converting of opponents into loyalists, which is assumed to be the most difficult of all.



**Table 1-1**  
**Support/Supporter Types**

<u>Type</u>	<u>Support type</u>	<u>Support reliability</u>	<u>Leader's task</u>	<u>Task difficulty</u>
Loyalists	<i>positive</i>	high	retention	not difficult
Uncommitted Supporters	<i>non-committal</i>	moderate/low	conviction	(relatively) difficult
Opponents	(opposition)	none	conversion	very difficult

Apart from in-built difficulties, there are also several potential factors that may preclude the leader from achieving the goals of satisfying the expectations and eradicating the concerns. In order to respond correctly to the followers' expectations and concerns, the leader first needs to know exactly what they are. It is impossible for the leader to deliver if s/he does not know what the followers want or do not want. With regard to supporters' expected behaviour (prototypes), Maurer and his associates suggested:

Effective political or other types of leaders indirectly pursue the content of these prototypes when they seek to learn the values, needs, and beliefs of subordinates or constituents. Leaders or potential leaders who ignore, or are unaware of, these important sources of information will likely not exemplify effective leadership in the eyes of their followers or constituents. (Maurer et.al.,1993: 973)

Equally imperative for the leader is to possess a measure to monitor her/his own performance, so that s/he can improve on the unsatisfactory areas of his/her own leadership. In Hollander's words: 'If the leader's self-perception is inaccurate with respect to the perceptions of others, the relationship is likely to be affected adversely' (Hollander,1992b: 50). Whether the leader can equip her/himself with such a measurement is an interesting question.

It is also possible to argue that even if the leader knows what needs to be done to increase his/her durability, what s/he can actually do is restricted. In some cases, some tasks may contradict one another, therefore their full achievement may be impossible. For example, if the new leader's *positive* support and *opposition* are both formed around his/her ideological stances, the tasks of retaining support and converting the opposition are irreconcilable.

Another important factor in determining the success (or failure) of the new leader in the above tasks is whether s/he is equipped with adequate skills (or abilities) and

orientations (or desires) to do so, as Harmel and Svåsand have asserted (1993). In other words, even when the leader has absolute power and freedom to exercise that power, the actual range of actions s/he can choose from may be restricted by his/her personality (internal dispositions).

### **The importance of the original support composition**

All these potential difficulties in fulfilling the followers' expectations and concerns highlights the importance of the original support composition – the constitution of the support base at the time of the leader's selection. If the leader is selected with a high proportion of loyalists in his/her support base, her/his position should logically enjoy higher durability. On the other hand, if the leader's original support composition consists largely of uncommitted supporters whose commitment to the leader is less reliable, the leader's potential vulnerability increases accordingly.

The importance of the original support may have indirect implications for leadership durability, too. If uncommitted supporters are a main component of the leader's initial support base which also includes a significant number of opponents, (at least) the internal management is expected to take up a considerable amount of the leader's time and energy. This may preclude him/her from establishing himself/herself outside the selectorate (in public) - an accomplishment which may be the key to boosting his/her standing in the opinion polls. As earlier discussed, for uncommitted supporters, the performance of the party (monitored in the polls) is assumed to play a significant role in deciding their support for the leader. If these assumptions are accurate, a leader with a weak original support composition is doubly handicapped, facing greater vulnerability.

### **Main propositions**

This study's main propositions are summarised in the following terms:

- P1 There are two degrees of quality of support (*positive* and *non-committal*) for a political leader. The selectorate, however, can be classified into three groups according to their positions towards the leader (loyalists—holders of *positive* support, uncommitted supporters—holders of *non-committal* support, and opponents).
- P2 In order to make the leadership more secure, the leader needs to increase the proportion of the loyalists among the selectorate. However, the achievement of this task is hindered by institutional, practical, and personality reasons.
- P3 The leader's durability can be explained (and largely predicted) by the *quality* of support - based upon the composition of the support - which the leader receives on his/her selection - as distinct from her/his *numerical* support.

### Case studies

Having reviewed previous literature and formed propositions, it seems necessary to justify the choice of the case studies, which are to test the propositions in an empirical manner. In particular, this choice needs to be justified in three respects, which are why a) New Zealand; b) the NZLP; and c) the 1993 and 1996 crises, are selected.

#### **Why New Zealand?**

There is a clear advantage in this decision. Firstly, as already mentioned, the prototype-candidate matching exercise may be more frequently observed in smaller selectorates. Like the two major parties in Australia<sup>54</sup>, in New Zealand political parties with experiences of leadership changes<sup>55</sup>, the selectors are MPs belonging to the respective parties. New Zealand uses a unicameral system and the number of MPs in the House of Representatives is relatively small: until 1996 when the number was increased to 120 with the introduction of a new electoral system, it had been gradually raised to 99. Accordingly, the caucus sizes are normally small enough to guarantee face-to-face contact between the leaders and followers. The largest caucus in New Zealand history was National's after the 1990 election with 67 MPs, which was still small enough to personally know the leader and potential leaders well. In addition, weekly caucus meetings provide a regular forum for MPs to attain first-hand observation and assessment of (potential) leaders' abilities and talents.

#### **Why the NZLP and why the 1993 and 1996 crises?**

Of the six political parties which secured representation in the New Zealand Parliament at the 1996 election, four political parties – National, Labour, the Alliance, and United – had experienced leadership changes in their history. However, a closer examination reveals that Labour and National were the only parties qualified.

The Alliance's only leadership change was temporary, caused by its inaugural leader, Jim Anderton's brief resignation from the post between 1994 and 1995<sup>56</sup>. United's leadership change was necessitated by the defeat of the founding leader, Clive Matthewson, at the 1996 election. The position was handed over to the only surviving MP of the party, Peter Dunne<sup>57</sup>. The other two political parties, New Zealand First

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<sup>54</sup> See, Weller (1994).

<sup>55</sup> This point is to be discussed shortly.

<sup>56</sup> During the period between 1994 and 1995, the party was led by Sandra Lee, the existing Deputy Leader. She voluntarily relinquished the position to accommodate Anderton's return.

<sup>57</sup> According to United's rules, '[t]he Parliamentary leader is chosen by the Parliamentary Caucus. In the event of there being only one MP, as at present, and a vacancy in the leadership occurring, the Party's Management Board makes the decision' (Dunne, 1999c).

(NZF) and ACT<sup>58</sup>, have retained the same leaders ever since they entered Parliament<sup>59</sup>. This leaves National and Labour the only possible candidates for recent case studies<sup>60</sup>.

Since their inception<sup>61</sup>, both parties have had plenty of experience in changing their leaders. Eight leaders have led the National caucus while its traditional rival has selected 11 leaders in its 83-year history. As far as the number of the leadership changes are concerned, both parties well qualify. Past leadership changes in the two parties are:

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<sup>58</sup> NZF's founding leader, Winston Peters, was a former MP of National. After being practically expelled from the party, he resigned from Parliament and won his Tauranga seat at the subsequent by-election in 1993 as an independent. Before the 1993 election, he formed NZF, which was to win seats the election. With regard to ACT, Richard Prebble was not the inaugural leader of the party. ACT was established as a political party in 1994 with a former Labour Finance Minister, Roger Douglas, as the leader. Prebble, Douglas' former Labour Cabinet colleague, succeeded his friend in 1996, before the election.

<sup>59</sup> During the 1996-1999 Parliamentary term, the number of political parties represented in Parliament increased by four. A former Alliance MP, Alamein Kopu, left the party and later formed Mana Wahine. Also from the Alliance, a compilation of five smaller parties, two Green Party MPs left the organisation to have a separate identity. Another Alliance MP, Frank Grover, also left the party to become the sole parliamentary representative of the Christian Heritage Party. Finally, five former NZF MPs led by Tau Henare set up their own political vehicle, Mauri Pacific. Although Mana Wahine and Mauri Pacific MPs' legal status was 'independents', these parties' respective leaders were Kopu and Henare. The two Green MPs, Jeanette Fitzsimons and Rod Donald, were/are sharing the co-leadership of the party. However, the leader of the Christian Heritage Party was not Grover, but Graham Capill, a non-parliamentarian. At the 1999 election, all these splinter parties, except for the Greens, were defeated. In the current Parliament, the parties represented are: Labour, the Alliance, National, the Greens, United, and ACT.

<sup>60</sup> In recent New Zealand political history, there was another party represented in Parliament – Social Credit (between 1979 and 1987). (The party later re-named itself the New Zealand Democrat Party. Since 1996, it has been a part of the Alliance, with two MPs in Parliament.) When Social Democrat had its MP(s) in Parliament, it experienced one leadership change. However, this change did not take place between MPs. Instead, the then leader, Bruce Beetham, who by then had lost his Rangitikei seat, lost the top position at the party's 1986 annual conference. Although at the time, there was still a Social Credit MP in Parliament (Garry Knapp), the new leader was a non-MP. Knapp became the leader in 1988 after he had lost his seat at the 1987 election (Miller, 1989: 256-257). In April 1991, John Wright became the leader of the Democrat Party. He later entered Parliament as an Alliance MP at the 1996 election.

<sup>61</sup> The New Zealand National Party was officially formed in 1936, as a result of the merger of part of the United Party, the Democratic Party and the Reform Party. The United and Reform Party governed the country as a coalition 'National Government' from 1931 and 1935 (Gustafson, 1997a: 137). The Labour Party, on the other hand, was established in 1916. See Brown (1962).

**Table 1-2**  
**Leadership changes of the New Zealand National and Labour Parties**

<b>National</b>			<b>Labour</b>		
<u>Leader</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Status</u>
A. Hamilton	1936	Opposition	H. Holland	1916	Opposition
S. Holland	1940	Opposition	Savage	1933	Opposition
Holyoake	1957	Opposition	Fraser	1940	Government
Marshall	1972	Government	Nash	1950	Opposition
Muldoon	1974	Opposition	Nordmeyer	1963	Opposition
McLay	1984	Opposition	Kirk	1966	Opposition
Bolger	1986	Opposition	Rowling	1974	Government
Shipley	1997	Government	Lange	1983	Opposition
			Palmer	1989	Government
			Moore	1990	Government
			Clark	1993	Opposition

Perhaps it is party leaders' universal wish to serve their leadership undisturbed until their chosen time of retirement. However, in reality, this has been a luxury which few leaders have ever enjoyed in New Zealand. Apart from four earlier Labour leaders who died in office (H. Holland, Savage, Fraser, and Kirk<sup>62</sup>), all past leaders of the two major parties relinquished the positions under (varying degrees of) pressure. Even those who stepped down for age/health-related reasons after lengthy services (S. Holland, Holyoake, and Nash) did so only reluctantly<sup>63</sup> after receiving unambiguous advice from their colleagues and party officials.

For the majority of past leaders, pressures to vacate the top positions came in more forceful and unequivocal forms, ie, coups or threats of them. In face of such adversity, past leaders reacted in various ways. Some leaders recognised the inevitability of their fate, following their unsuccessful effort to fend off challenges, and decided to step aside 'voluntarily', in view of preserving the image of party unity (Rowling, Marshall<sup>64</sup>, and Bolger<sup>65</sup>). Others refused to succumb to the pressures and resorted to caucus votes in vain, (Hamilton, Muldoon, McLay<sup>66</sup>, Nordmeyer, and Moore). Two other leaders became tired of infighting and surrendered the leadership, while a majority of their caucuses were believed to be still behind them (Lange and Palmer).

Whatever their reactions, one pattern has become clear from history: modern leadership of National and Labour is likely to end as a direct result of coups or threats

<sup>62</sup> For Holland and Savage, see Gustafson (1986b). For the Fraser/Nash, Nash/Nordmeyer successions, see Sinclair (1976). For the Nordmeyer/Kirk succession, see Dunmore (1972) and Eagles and James (1973). For the leadership change from Kirk to Rowling, see Henderson (1981) and Bassett (1976).

<sup>63</sup> For Holland and Holyoake, see, Gustafson (1997b). For Fraser, see, Thorn (1952).

<sup>64</sup> See, Jackson (1978).

<sup>65</sup> See, Bolger, (1998), pp12-20.

<sup>66</sup> For these National leaders, see, Gustafson (1986a).

of them. In more than two decades, all leadership changes of the two parties have taken place in such a manner without exception.

Given this 'forced' leadership transition pattern being the norm, for proper understanding of leadership durability in New Zealand, a study of how leadership collapsed alone is not sufficient. Such a case study may provide insights into how and why it fails. However, it may not be able to contribute to our knowledge as to how and why leadership survives. In other words, in order to gain the entire picture of leadership durability and test the validity of this study's propositions, it is vital to examine leadership which successfully defended itself against an attempt to overthrow it as well.

As Table 1-2 exhibits, leadership changes did not happen at a regular frequency. Although their frequency has increased in recent years - especially for the Labour Party - they are still rare events nevertheless. While every leadership has some critics within its ranks, internal frustration rarely develops beyond grumbling, posing no real threat to the leadership. In some instances, there were disgruntled individual (or a group of) MPs openly attacking the existing leadership, but they sorely lacked the support necessary to pose even a moderate risk of unseating the incumbents. Labour's John A Lee (against Savage) in the late 1930s, National's Derek Quigley (against Muldoon<sup>67</sup>) and Winston Peters (against Bolger<sup>68</sup>) in the late 1980s and early 1990s were among such examples. On other occasions, discontent with the leadership developed into discussions about a possible move against the incumbents without proceeding any further. This was because the conspirators abandoned the idea upon realising their slim chance of success<sup>69</sup>

Even rarer than leadership changes are unsuccessful coup attempts on the leadership. When the incumbents are challenged, they normally do not survive. There is a very good reason for this: before launching an organised challenge against the existing leader, insurgents carefully ensure that they have sufficient numbers to succeed. If unsuccessful, a coup attempt makes the situation, which was presumably desperate, even worse. The internal divisions of the party are aggravated, and perhaps more importantly, are likely to become public knowledge through media exposure. The leader survives only as a 'lame-duck', with his/her authority and credibility severely damaged. This could only do harm to a party's electoral chances. On a personal level, rebel MPs may be subject to retaliation from the leader. As a consequence of their disloyalty, demotion in ranking and responsibilities (probably cabinet positions if the party is in government)

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<sup>67</sup> See, Gustafson (1986a: 147-148).

<sup>68</sup> See, Hames (1995).

<sup>69</sup> One of such talks took place in the National caucus in 1989. A group of MPs led by the then Finance spokesperson, Ruth Richardson, contemplated challenging the leader, Jim Bolger. The move did not develop into anything more serious due to the lack of support. See, Hames (1995: 92-93).

may follow<sup>70</sup>. In addition, if the party fares poorly at the next election, they may be held personally accountable not only by the leadership but also the caucus and party at large. For these reasons, a decision to challenge the leader is normally taken with every caution, as well as confidence of success.

Since 1935, there have been only five known cases of unsuccessful leadership change attempts in the two major parties which were organised by a group of caucus dissenters, which then went to or went close to caucus votes. Of them, four took place in Labour and one in National. They are:

**Table 1-3**  
**Failed Leadership changes of the New Zealand National and Labour Parties**

<b>National</b>			<b>Labour</b>		
<u>Leader</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Status</u>
Muldoon	1980	Government	Nash	1954	Opposition
			Rowling	1980	Opposition
			Lange	1988-89	Government
			Clark	1996	Opposition

While this study's propositions did not set specific conditions regarding their applicability, it seems wise to limit potential variables that may distort the findings. Included in such variables are: a) internal differences of mechanics (such as structure and leadership selection procedure) between parties; and b) the status of the party (whether it is in government or in opposition). This means that only one party is to be studied and that both a leadership change and an unsuccessful leadership coup had to occur while the party was in the same status.

In deciding which cases should be studied, practical considerations also need to play a part. To conduct successful research, accurate reconstruction of the events surrounding the leadership changes and crises becomes crucial. Nevertheless, in New Zealand, there are not many comprehensive and detailed historical records of leadership changes/crises, either by academics or journalists. While the media tended to cover such events with strong interest, there is still not sufficient information available. This is

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<sup>70</sup> Public criticisms of the leadership have claimed several well-known casualties in recent history. In 1982, the 10th ranked Minister of Works and Development, Derek Quigley, resigned from his post after he had aired his disagreement with the Government's economic policy. Muldoon, who was the Prime minister as well as the Minister of Finance, gave him options of resigning or making a public apology. Quigley opted for the former. In 1988, Lange dismissed Richard Prebble as the Minister of State Owned Enterprises following the latter's public criticisms of him. Winston Peters suffered demotion twice during his time as a National MP. The first came in 1989 after a series of thinly veiled criticisms of Bolger's leadership. He slipped five spots in the ranking from eight (frontbench) to 13. Two years later, he was expelled from the Cabinet (Minister of Maori Affairs) by the same leader for attacking (amongst others) the National Government's economic policy.

particularly the case for the behaviour, thoughts, and feelings of caucus members, all of which hold the key to testing this study's propositions.

Given this situation, personal interviews with MPs and those closely involved become vital. However, here lie difficulties. MPs tend to see leadership changes or challenges as sensitive issues, and consequently many are reluctant to discuss them. Leadership crises are often traumatising experiences, leaving emotional scars in caucuses. In addition, the image of party unity has been an important asset in a New Zealand election. In this light, helping to reconstruct a history of internal divisions and their analysis – even if it is for academic purposes – may be seen by politicians as disadvantageous to their own interests.

Not surprisingly, such reluctance intensifies if leadership changes/challenges were recent and those involved are still current colleagues. A study of older leadership crises is more likely to secure co-operation from MPs. But even there a problem exists - the accuracy of information they can provide. Human memories deteriorate as time passes, and recollections of leadership crises are no exceptions. A study of events that are more than, say, eight years old, could be problematic<sup>71</sup>.

After taking all the above points into consideration, this study is to examine the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP) in opposition between 1990 and 1996 as case studies. The period covers one successful leadership change in 1993 from Moore to Clark and one failed attempt against Clark in 1996 as well as their lead-up periods.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to outline the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) of New Zealand's leadership selection procedure<sup>72</sup>.

### **Rules and procedures of PLP leadership selection**

Since the first leader, Harry Holland, was elected in 1919, selection of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) leadership has been the right exclusively enjoyed by caucus members. While the Extra-Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP) has no doubt influenced the outcomes of previous caucus decisions on the issue<sup>73</sup>, it has had no formal say in the process. Traditionally the EPLP has been reluctant to formally recognise the position of the PLP leadership as a position of any significance, and this attitude is evident in the fact that the party's *Constitution and Rules* (NZLP, 1997) barely mentions the existence

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<sup>71</sup> This, of course, varies with individuals. However, when an interview was attempted in 1997 with one former MP regarding the 1989 leadership change, s/he admitted that many of the crucial details were beyond his/her recollection. Some MPs also attested that even the 1993 leadership change, which was by then a five-year old event, was difficult to remember.

<sup>72</sup> For past leadership changes/crises, see Appendix 1.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Henderson (1981: 12, 20, and 25).



of a parliamentary leadership<sup>74</sup> (Jackson, 1992b). In fact, the selection procedure of the PLP leadership has no mention at all in the same document.

Instead, the procedures and rules of the PLP leadership selection are stipulated in 'Parliamentary Labour Party (Caucus) Rules'. Although the first leadership selection was held more than 80 years ago, the basic framework of the selection has remained virtually intact since. The method of selection that has been constantly used is 'exhaustive ballot' by which a series of votes are cast with the candidate with the fewest votes to be eliminated from the contest each time until one contender (the eventual winner) has a clear majority of votes.

Another aspect of the PLP leadership selection, which has not changed, is in terms of the requirement for leadership review. Of course, selection of new leaders has become necessary whenever the incumbent either died or resigned. However, in addition, since 1939 the rule has demanded a PLP leader test his/her colleagues support for her/him every three years at a caucus meeting (Sinclair, 1976: 293). However, the timing of such a periodical review has been altered twice during the PLP history. Initially, leadership was tested at the start of the parliamentary session that preceded a general election. At the 1964 Labour Conference, this was changed to have a leadership election at the last caucus meeting of the year which preceded a general election year (Milne, 1966: 144). This move was believed to provide a newly selected leader (if there was a leadership change) more time to establish him/herself before an election (Milne, 1966: 144). But this extra time was not considered sufficient for a new leader. In 1980, as part of an upgrading, updating and modernising process of the caucus rules, the timing of a regular leadership review was shifted to the first caucus of the year preceding the election year – normally at the beginning of February. Jonathan Hunt, a veteran MP<sup>75</sup> and former Senior Whip, explained the rationale behind this change in the following terms:

The change was made because it was felt this would give any new leader and/or deputy leader<sup>76</sup> at least 20 months to prepare for the following election and would also allow anyone defeated to consider his or her position before the selection processes were undertaken (Hunt, 1998).

Despite the explicit provision of a once-in-every-Parliamentary term occasion for leadership review, however, there is no time for a Labour leader to relax. This is because the caucus rules allow Labour MPs to suspend the rules if such a motion is supported

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<sup>74</sup> *Rues and Constitution* mentions the 'Leader of the Parliamentary Party' three times in the rules related to the party's Moderating Committee (Rule 263(b), 267(a), and 269), which is in charge of finalising the party list for an election. Also, the position of the 'Chairperson of the Parliamentary Labour Party' is mentioned in Rule 163 regarding the New Zealand Council. Jackson attributed the EPLP's obvious disinterest in the PLP leadership to the party being 'a group-based party denying a role for individual leadership other than by the President of the party organisation' (Jackson, 1991: 48).

<sup>75</sup> Hunt first entered Parliament in 1966 and is the longest serving MP in the current Parliament.

<sup>76</sup> Deputy leadership of the PLP is also subject to a regular review at the same time as leadership.

unanimously by those present at a given caucus meeting. This means that any MP can raise a leadership issue at any time if s/he so wishes. As Hunt explains:

It has always been the right of any caucus member to put down a motion relating to the caucus rules at any time. This, of course, includes the rule about selection of leader and deputy leader. Notice has to be given at least a week before (usually the caucus before) any such motion can be put. This is to enable anyone who is not present when the notice is given to be able to have time to get to the caucus (if necessary from overseas) (Hunt, 1998).

Therefore, by international standards, leaders of the PLP are given surprisingly little protection. Or, in Weller's words, s/he is in 'open season'. Arnold Nordmeyer has been the only Labour leader who lost the leadership at a regular leadership review. The other leaders who lost their positions either directly or indirectly as a result of internal pressures/coups – Rowling, Lange, Palmer, and Moore – did so outside the scheduled time. Unlike the British Conservative Party, challengers are not required to have formal nominees and seconders, nor in fact, are they required to reveal their intentions of challenge beforehand. There are no rules equivalent to the British Conservatives' former 15% rule; for the NZLP, a mere overall majority of the total votes suffices for victory<sup>77</sup> In short, these low institutional barriers make incumbent PLP leaders extraordinarily vulnerable to potential challenges. After the 1996 failed leadership coup against Helen Clark, a former leadership contender of the British Labour Party, Bryan Gould, compared the NZLP with his former party in the following terms:

If [British Labour Party Leader] Mr Blair's mind were occasionally to stray towards the plight of his New Zealand colleague, he would be astonished to learn how little protection she [Clark] is offered by her party's rules. The idea that a challenge could be mounted to the party leader at any time and without notice, simply because a handful of caucus members felt like trying their luck, would be regarded in Britain as laughable (Gould, 1996).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, previous studies of leadership durability have been surveyed. What has become clear is that neither conventional approaches – institutional, individual nor contextual – is equipped with the explanatory ability for cases such as the NZLP. It has been pointed out that the long overlooked fact of leadership - its retention being entirely dependent upon followers' continuous support – needs to be fully acknowledged and incorporated into a formal theory of leadership durability. In an attempt to meet this

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<sup>77</sup> Since the first leadership contest in 1964, all the leadership votes have been battled between two candidates. The vote results, normally known only to the Whips, have not been publicly announced. The only exception to this rule was the 1993 contest, following which the victorious result was announced by the Clark camp.

challenge, this chapter has offered such an alternative framework in the form of propositions.

The next task of this study is to test these propositions' validity in empirical studies. As the first case of two, the following three chapters examine Mike Moore's loss of leadership in 1993.

## CHAPTER 3

### 1993 leadership change overview: 1990 ~ 1993

#### Introduction

As already noted in Chapter 1, Moore won the leadership in September 1990 with an overwhelming majority. However, after just three years, he was deposed by a caucus vote. Before analysing Moore's leadership collapse (why it collapsed), it seems important to learn what happened during his leadership tenure. This chapter provides an overview and description of background events leading up to and including the development of the caucus' discontent with Moore's leadership, that resulted in the 1993 leadership change.

#### The 1990 General Election

When Moore took over the leadership from Geoffrey Palmer in a desperate attempt to turn around the party's dismal popularity before the 1990 General Election, only fifty three days were left for him to accomplish the task. In the event, Labour still suffered the worst defeat in its party history, with its caucus size slashed from 57 to 29. Despite the magnitude of the election defeat, however, Moore's leadership largely escaped criticism.

There was a view held by many of the surviving MPs that the leadership change was justified and that he saved about 10 seats which might have been lost under Palmer's leadership. For example, Helen Clark<sup>78</sup>, who played a crucial role in the leadership change, said in early January 1991: '...I became more and more convinced that it was the right thing to do as the weeks went on, because you felt the campaign lift. What was important was that people felt there was another chance to have a go' (Stone, 1991). Elsewhere, Clark also said: 'It was a desperate move of course, but it worked. We won 29 seats. It also solved the leadership question. Had the leadership not changed in September, a number of tactical questions would have arisen after the election, like would it have been fair to have a new leader immediately? We would have been a lame-duck opposition with 19 members'<sup>79</sup> (McLoughlin, 1991: 53).

Nevertheless, this favourable view of Moore's achievement was not universally shared by the caucus members on his becoming the leader in September 1990. The manner in which Moore replaced Palmer provoked noticeable resentment at that time.

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<sup>78</sup> Moore attests that Clark and Cullen were 'gracious enough' to admit to him personally 'that they would have lost their seats in 1990' if he had not taken over the leadership (Moore, 2000).

<sup>79</sup> Clark, however, changed her view on Moore's achievement. In an interview in 1995, she said: 'I don't think he (Palmer) would have done any worse (than Moore)' (Chisholm, 1995: C1). The reason why she changed her earlier view is unclear.

For instance, Ruth Dyson, the then President of the Labour Party<sup>80</sup>, recalls strong feelings of unhappiness in the caucus at that time.

I had to do a lot of pacifying of people in our caucus, because they were very unhappy... really unhappy... that Geoffrey stood down.. [A] lot of people in our caucus saw it as very unfair to Geoffrey... They thought that Mike Moore had deliberately undermined him in the media and within the Cabinet... Geoffrey had really strong loyalty to the party, and that was being abused (Dyson, interview, 1998).

This negative view was also translated into some people's interpretation of the 1990 election result and Moore's allegedly positive impact on it. Richard Northey, a strong Palmer supporter and an MP who lost his seat in the election was amongst them. He notes:

A leadership change would not make an unwinnable election any more winnable. I believe the change made no significant difference to the final election result. In my view the change in leadership and the departure of Palmer and Woollaston probably actually lost us the green/liberal electorates of Waitakere and Lyttleton. The change may have saved us the working class electorates of Papatoetoe and West Auckland<sup>81</sup>. (Northey, 1998a)

### **The new caucus**

Some antagonism towards Moore remained in the caucus when Labour returned to Parliament after the election. However, with the caucus size being nearly halved, despair and shock overwhelmed any negative feelings towards him. Moore reports the mood of the Labour caucus then in the following terms:

[T]hey were stunned, defeated, demoralised. Some of them ...didn't want to come to Parliament at all. They were pathetic... some of them just didn't believe it possible to win again, and they were broken. They were exhausted. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Newcomers to the caucus were seven MPs<sup>82</sup>, the majority of whom later formed the core group supporting the 1993 leadership change. However, while some of them came in with doubts about his suitability as the leader, a leadership change was far from their

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<sup>80</sup> The Party President attends weekly caucus meetings although they have no voting rights.

<sup>81</sup> Northey's view was shared by other members in the caucus. For example, Richard Prebble stated: '...putting Mike in as leader certainly didn't help us' (McLoughlin, 1991: 53). Also, academics were unconvinced about to what extent, if at all, the new leader helped the party's fortune, although they generally agreed that the leadership change to Moore did not harm Labour's electoral chance. See, Jackson (1991) and Vowles and Aimer (1993: 193-196).

<sup>82</sup> They were: John Blincoe, Lianne Dalziel; George Hawkins; Pete Hodgson; Steve Maharey; Paul Swain; and Judith Tizard.

minds at this stage. Judith Tizard, who succeeded her father's seat<sup>83</sup> of Panmure, attests: '... I don't think any of us came in saying, "I'm going to get rid of Mike Moore". Certainly not' (Tizard, interview, 1998). In sum, in those early days, Moore enjoyed 'relative support' in the caucus (Anonymous, interview, 1998). Tizard adds:

When we came in in 1990, the seven new MPs were very aware that we were coming into an existing group that was pretty shell-shocked. They had had six years in Government, and it had been a hellish time in some aspects and very exciting and constructive time in many other areas. I think most of us - well I certainly - when I came in in 1990, was determined to try to put other things aside and just get on with being the best Labour Party we could in Opposition, and I hoped in Government in 1993. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Due to the small size of the caucus, those newcomers found themselves thrown into the deep end straight away by being given heavy responsibilities, which would have gone to more seasoned veterans under normal circumstances. This experience presented those new intakes with great political opportunities as well as a very steep learning curve without the luxury of the normal 'apprenticeship'. As Steve Maharey notes:

Because [we] didn't have many other people left in the party in front of [us]... so, we were all spokespeople, had senior positions, had media profile much faster than most politicians had, simply because there was no-one else around. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

This learning process was hastened even further by the zeal of the new National Government, led by its Finance Minister, Ruth Richardson, to extend the economic reform programme into Labour's sacred territories such as industrial relations<sup>84</sup>. In Tizard's words: 'I think we came in very positively. I think then we went into hell'. She further describes her early days in Parliament:

... there were only 29 of us - so we very quickly went into sort of full attack opposition mode, and we were expected to perform up to a very high level. And it was great working with all of those ex-Cabinet Ministers. Most of them were very generous with their time... Working with people like Helen [Clark] and Michael Cullen and David Caygill, particularly for me, was one of the most interesting and exciting political periods I have ever had. It was the most extraordinarily high pressured apprenticeship on parliamentary performance and procedures, but it was also extraordinarily useful training. We had to come up to speed at a very quick rate on all sorts of issues. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Under Moore's leadership, the Labour opposition bounced back quickly. With the assistance of the National Government's record unpopularity, by April 1991, Labour

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<sup>83</sup> Bob Tizard, former Deputy Prime Minister in the third Labour Government (1972-75) and Cabinet Minister during the fourth Labour Government (1984-90) retired in 1990.

<sup>84</sup> See Richardson (1995), Chapter 5.

and Moore were registered as the most popular party and the most preferred Prime Minister respectively in some opinion polls such as *One Network* - Heylen Polls. In Parliament, the small caucus functioned as a highly effective team. This impressive turnaround led one journalist to ask in November 1991 in astonishment: 'Who would have expected the remnants of the parliamentary Labour Party to come back to life so soon with such zest?' (McLoughlin, 1991: 47) The same journalist commented on Moore's leadership: 'Despite the doubts, some of which remain, Mike Moore apparently does have what it takes' (McLoughlin, 1991: 47).

### **The early signs of discontent**

After this favourable report, however, the situation changed somewhat. By mid 1992, although Labour still remained as the most popular political party in the country according to the opinion polls, Moore had surrendered the 'most preferred Prime Minister' status to a rebel Government MP, Winston Peters<sup>85</sup>. The performance of the party in Parliament also deteriorated. The same journalist cited above revisited the Opposition party in December 1992 to report: 'Labour no longer has the edge in the House and it continues to arouse scant interest anywhere else. The small size of the Labour team is starting to tell' (McLoughlin, 1992: 58). Constant speculation on the security of his leadership, that was mostly circulated by the National Party, were also noted (McLoughlin, 1992: 57-59).

Indeed, the discontent with Moore's leadership was growing within the caucus like a 'slow burner' (Goulter, 1993e). David Caygill, who served Moore as the Finance Minister (1990) and finance spokesperson (1990-1991), describes the slow yet gradual erosion of support for Moore within the caucus during this period in the following terms:

...after the 1990 election, I think Mike enjoyed a period of relative calm. I think his leadership was not in question for the first couple of years or so. It was only as the growing... as the feeling grew that he was not sufficiently competent in a number of respects. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Maharey agrees. He asserts that the later period of the 1990-1993 caucus was 'dominated by questions about Mike's leadership', which laid a foundation for the future revolt against the leader. Thus, 'it [the 1993 leadership change] was not something that came out of the blue' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

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<sup>85</sup> Peters was initially appointed as Minister of Maori Affairs in the fourth National Government in 1990 only to be sacked from the position in October 1991 for his open criticism of the Government of which he was part. He was removed from the National caucus in October 1992, and denied his candidacy for his electorate, Tauranga, for the 1993 election in March 1993. He promptly resigned from Parliament and won the subsequent by-election held the following month. In July 1993, he formed his own political party, New Zealand First.

Michael Cullen contends that he was approached by some of his fellow caucus members regarding his interest in the leadership as early as 1991<sup>86</sup> (Cullen, interview, 1998). He was not the only MP who received such an approach. David Lange recollected February 1992 as the first time he realised the possibility of a leadership change. At the two-day caucus meeting held in his electorate (Mangere) 'a small cluster of colleagues put it to me that Mangere should do more than provide the venue for the caucus meeting' (Lange, 1994: 70). In response to this approach, in early April 1992, Lange publicly expressed his renewed interest in the top position. The former Prime Minister was confident that he could make a better leader than the incumbent, although adding 'I'm not going to go and market myself' (Reid, 1992). Moore's response was blunt. 'He's a great guy with a lot to offer... but the best advice he can give us is what not to do' (Reid, 1992: 53). The then Chief Whip, Jonathan Hunt, also dismisses the seriousness of the caucus discontent with Moore at this stage, by referring to the first caucus meeting in February 1992 when the leadership automatically came up for review.

When the ballot was called, no-one, no-one opposed the current leader or deputy leader, that was then Mike Moore and Helen Clark. There was no ballot at all. While David might have had people who had a few drinks chat to him and everything like that, even though I'm well aware of what you're talking about, I don't think at any stage there was a serious challenge that would have succeeded. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

Another sign of disillusionment appeared before Christmas in 1992, shortly after the Wellington by-election<sup>87</sup> in the form of 'grumbles' among some MPs (Edwards, 1993a) in response to Moore's 'erratic' behaviour during the campaign for the by-election. As is to be discussed more in detail in the next chapter, Moore's problem in this regard was nothing new. However, his unpredictability and poor sense of judgement exhibited in public during the 1992 Wellington by-election induced some MPs to seriously consider their leader's suitability to lead a major party. A political journalist, Ruth Laugesen, reported his behaviour at a press conference, held the day before the voting day, to which Moore brought a sledgehammer, claiming: '...let's go to the Wellington Hospital, let's smash up the cash registers' in an effort presumably to highlight National's user-pay policy in health. Laugesen continued:

The press conference, called to discuss health, blossomed into a stand-up routine which traversed the nature of karma ('I thought karma was a night club act'), [National Prime Minister] Jim Bolger's diction ("It's great after 43 years to find someone who can be condescending to [sic] about the English language")

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<sup>86</sup> He said that he was not interested in moving against Moore (Cullen, interview, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> The by-election was caused by the resignation of the incumbent Labour MP, Fran Wilde, who had won the mayoralty of Wellington. The by-election was won by Labour with an increased majority (although with fewer votes due to the poor turnout). For detail, see Miller and Catt (1993).



and Wellington newspapers ("Let's not get into Wellington sewerage problems.")

He failed to tell the assembled reporters anything new about health. (Laugesen, 1993a)

Laugesen went on to ask what some Labour MPs and Labour party officials (who were incensed by, in her words, 'their leader's ill-judged behaviour... the latest in a string of bizarre press conferences') had in mind: 'Was this the behaviour of a prime minister in waiting?' (Laugesen, 1993a)

Although not personally worried about Moore's behaviour at that time, Maharey says he was aware of 'considerable debate through that by-election about Mike's leadership', which was 'fairly wide spread' both 'in caucus and outside' (Maharey, interview, 1998). Indeed, outside the caucus, Auckland Labour circles were reported to have held discussions regarding the possibility of ousting Moore (Laugesen, 1993d). Back in the caucus, concerned MPs approached Clark for a potential challenge to the leader (Edwards, 1993h). Clark, in preparation for a possible challenge against her leader, was reported to have softened her image by lengthening her hair and expanding her wardrobe (Laugesen, 1993a) to counter her austere, cold public image.

As with the earlier approaches to Cullen and Lange in 1991, the rumoured threat failed to materialise. Labour's victory at the by-election, no doubt helped deflate the caucus frustration. As Hunt notes:

I heard... you heard talk. I mean [we] always hear talk in political circles, and particularly when you are not doing well in the polls and you hear more talk. Right? But after the Wellington by-election, which we had won, and that was regarded as a good result, there was no serious discussion. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

### **Moore's earlier survival – why?**

Apart from the favourable by-election outcome, at least two factors worked in Moore's favour. They are also crucial in understanding why Moore was not successfully challenged between 1990 and 1993 prior to the General Election. Firstly, there was no single alternative, behind whom the anti-Moore force could unite. Dyson and Caygill, for example, indicate that they would never have supported Lange as an alternative leader in early 1992 (Dyson, interview, 1998; Caygill, interview, 1998). With regard to the rumoured threat around the Wellington by-election in 1992, while Clark's name was mentioned as a potential contender, she was by no means a unanimous choice. It is unclear how seriously - if at all - Clark herself was interested in challenging her leader at this stage. Caygill approached the deputy leader sometime around that year, indicating his willingness to support her in case she decided to stand for the top position. In response, she made her unavailability clear at that stage (Caygill, interview, 1998). With

no alternative leader readily available, any coup attempt was destined to fail. In this context, when asked how seriously Moore's position was threatened in late 1992, Maharey replies:

I don't think it was very serious at all because I don't think there was a serious alternative candidate... I was pretty peripheral to that discussion, so although I may have known there was a serious candidate, but as part and a member of the caucus I wasn't aware of a serious alternative to Mike. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Secondly, despite the escalating disillusionment with Moore in the caucus, there never was sufficient will nor numbers to force a leadership change. For example, Maharey and Dyson, who were both Clark supporters in 1993, claim no involvement in the earlier grumbling. Dyson further explains that a serious leadership change was simply unthinkable for the caucus, which was severely suffering from the strain due to its small size.

Before the 1993 election? No... no. I think one of the reasons for that was that we had a really small caucus. A lot of people were incredibly over-worked, and it was a very demanding time for our caucus, from my understanding. And most of the caucus, I think, just couldn't have coped with something as traumatic as that. You need a bit of residual strength to go through a leadership change, and there was just none in our caucus. If you divide a really small group of people like that, you'd have major problems. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Another MP, Jack Elder, a loyal Moore supporter, is more blunt. 'I don't think they probably had the numbers by early 1993, and it wasn't until we had the election in 1993, that they had the clear numbers' (Elder, interview, 1998). Without a majority will to oust the incumbent, no challenge could be realistic. As Hunt, a seasoned political observer<sup>88</sup>, puts it matter of factly, 'you have to have the numbers in order to mount a serious challenge' (Hunt, interview, 1998).

Under these circumstances, Moore could afford to emphasise the benign nature of the caucus frustration in March 1993, when asked by a journalist about the state of his leadership. He then admitted that there was a sign of frustration typically associated with being Opposition MPs, but quickly dismissed its seriousness: 'Nobody is more frustrated than I am. The discipline we have shown in not producing promises and instant policies has a toll. You are not giving your troops anything to fight with... We

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<sup>88</sup> Hunt, who entered Parliament in 1966, is the longest serving incumbent Labour MP. He was said to have always accurately predicted the outcomes of the Labour votes that he had experienced (Clifton, 2000a: 27). Given this record, he boasts: 'I reckon I could count. There are very few people who can in a political party, because they don't listen. In order to count, you've got to listen, and that's not being facile. I really mean that seriously. I can tell what the present score is in our caucus at the present time, exactly.... I may be wrong by one or two, but I would be almost exactly right' (Hunt, interview, 1998).

have sent people in to speak to pensioner meetings with no armour and no sword' (Edwards, 1993a).

### **Moore's control weakens**

In July 1993, the National Party regained the lead in the TV3-Gallup poll from Labour (*The Independent*, 16 July 1993). This revival of Government popularity, which was believed a reflection of the improving economic conditions (Vowles et al, 1995: Chapter 4; Edlin, 1993) suggested that Labour's support had been 'soft', or as one journalist stated: 'Its [Labour's] leadership is popular only in that it is less unpopular than National's' (Riddell, 1992). This slipping popularity of the party and thus the diminishing of any chance of winning the Treasury bench at the 1993 election was worrying news for Moore. It had been widely speculated by the media that his future depended upon the election outcome (e.g., James, 1993e: 165 and McLoughlin, 1992: 59).

Moore's potential vulnerability was unexpectedly confirmed by one of his own colleagues. On 19 September an Australian interview TV programme, which was made two months earlier, was aired in New Zealand. In the programme, David Lange predicted that Moore's leadership would be in danger if Labour failed to win the election. The former leader named Clark as a likely successor<sup>89</sup>.

As the National Government tried to capitalise on this latest revelation of internal division, response from the Labour leadership was prompt. Moore disregarded the relevance of Lange's comments by describing the former leader as someone from the past. 'David Lange and Roger Douglas were both significant political figures in their day. They have had their day'. The annoyed Moore went further to imply that the former leader continued to make unnecessary noise because he was not engaged in any meaningful activities, adding that as a manager, Moore would find 'the creative role for him'. One of the roles suggested by Moore was to investigate the formation of a Pacific Parliament (*The New Zealand Herald*, 21 September 1993, Sec.1, p.5).

### **Clark's stance on the top position**

Clark also played down Lange's comments: 'We're not speculating on what would happen, because we're planning to win' (Goulter, 1993a). However, at the same time, she admitted that any party that lost an election would reassess its position, although such a post-election re-evaluation would not inevitably lead to a leadership change. 'All senior figures would have a chance to reconsider their position, and I think everybody

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<sup>89</sup> This was not the first time Lange sniped at Moore and Labour under his leadership. The former leader had used his fortnightly column in the *Dominion* to criticise Labour's stance on certain policy areas for some time. On 15 July 1993, Lange also told the Australian Institute of Company Directors that the National Party was likely to win the coming election.

will do that' (Laugesen, 1993b). What was interesting was that she did not categorically rule herself out as a potential candidate in case of a leadership change. Her given reason for hesitating to consider assuming the top job was not her loyalty to Moore - as expected from a deputy leader - but her concern about the long hours and pressure associated with the leader's position (Goulter, 1993b).

The doubt about Clark's loyalty to Moore and speculation on her leadership ambition was again highlighted when she admitted in an interview with *the Listener* to having 'a few doubts' about her leader's trade policy ideas in early October. Asked about her leadership aspirations, her reply was far from a flat denial (Hubbard, 1993b: 31). Clark's ambiguous stance was in a stark contrast to the straightforward declaration of loyalty made by the finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen, who was also tipped as a potential leadership contender (eg., *The National Business Review*, 24 September 1993, p. 29). He stressed his satisfaction with Moore's leadership and asserted that he would be happy to support the leader's retention even in the case of Labour's election loss. Cullen also denied his own leadership ambition without a hint of hesitation (*The New Zealand Herald*, 22 September 1993, Sec.1, p.5).

### **The growing discontent with Moore**

On 16 October, less than three weeks away from the polling date, another blow was delivered by Lange. In his campaign opening speech in his Mangere electorate, Lange criticised Labour's campaign style for ignoring the interests of its traditional supporters. More importantly, in the same speech he stated:

If you are on a low or middle income and you are suddenly faced with serious illness or major accident or you are made redundant, a few dollars are not much use.

I think of the man I met in this office who could not work because of his heart condition, who was on a two-year waiting list and who could not raise the \$20,000 his doctors told him he would need to get the operation done privately.

Think of the people we know who have lost what took them years to build up when they lost their jobs. Think of the bright kids who come from low and middle-income families. Where are their parents going to find \$12,000 for the last year of a physiotherapy course?

The only answer to those problems is to fund the social services publicly and make them free to everybody.

What I am saying is that progressive income tax is not a burden. For the great majority of the people it is the road to liberation. (*The New Zealand Herald*, 19 October 1993, Sec.1, p.4)

Lange did not call specifically for a tax system with a 'more progressive' nature than the existing one and technically his comments could be interpreted as an endorsement of the

tax system already in place<sup>90</sup>, but this was not the way the media and the opposition parties saw them. Quickly seizing this latest opportunity, Bolger pointed out that Lange's comments were 'showing splits and divisions' in Labour over economic policy (Riddell, 1993a). Once again, the irritated Moore labelled the former Prime Minister an important person 'in the past' (Armstrong 1993b).

Lange's comments had a devastating effect on Moore's campaign. It not only distracted the party from its planned attack against National's health policies, but also eroded Labour's credibility as the coherent, trustworthy alternative Government. In the previous weeks, Labour had been strenuously denying National's claim (eg., Clifton, 1993a) that in order to finance its policies, Labour would have to raise taxes should it be elected as Government<sup>91</sup>. As McGregor noted, 'Taxation was to develop as one of the critical issues for the Labour Party in the 1993 election campaign. It exposed policy fissures, highlighted personality divisions, revealed the fragility of the political ego and threatened to destabilise the presidential-style election campaign run by Moore' (1996b: 127).

### Policy conflicts

Labour's internal policy discrepancies were further unearthed within a mere three days. During their visit to the Wellington Chamber of Commerce on 19 October, Justice spokesperson David Caygill and Wellington Central MP Chris Laidlaw made comments on the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), which Labour promised to repeal<sup>92</sup>. Although confirming their intention to honour this election promise if elected, Caygill argued: 'We think frankly the Employment Contracts Act has introduced a level of flexibility into wage bargaining'. Laidlaw agreed: 'Experience has shown there have been some elements of the Employment Contracts Act which are not as bad as maybe we thought they were'. The indication given in these comments was that whatever change the party intended to make to the controversial legislation, it would be minor. In Caygill's words, 'We don't see the changes we propose to the Employment Contracts Act turning the

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<sup>90</sup> Labour's finance spokesman, Michael Cullen was at pains to rationalise Lange's comments along this line. Nevertheless, when asked by reporters why he thought Lange made such comments, his reply was: 'You'll have to ask Mr Lange that. I have never been very good at psychology in that respect' (Armstrong, 1993b). It is important to note that Labour's 1993 election manifesto did not promise free health or free education which Lange argued be provided through the progressive tax system. See NZLP (1993).

<sup>91</sup> National's claim was so constant that Moore was forced to pledge in a televised leaders' debate that he would resign if his government increased GST to 17.5%. (The specificity of his pledge seemed peculiar as neither a GST increase to anything but the indicated rate or other forms of tax increases such as income tax was excluded.) He later said on the pledge: 'Of course it's not a stunt. Other than Yvonne (his wife), the thing I treasure the most is my seat in Parliament'. 'It's all I've got'. (*The Press*, 16 October 1993, p.3)

<sup>92</sup> The party manifesto stated: 'Industrial relations is one of the weapons used by the National Government to divide New Zealand. The Employment Contracts Act has been used to attack the wages and conditions of many workers' (NZLP, 1993c: 124).

clock back but we do see them introducing an element of fairness' (Edwards, 1993b). The two MPs' remarks were, in fact, not at variance with Labour's official position stated in the manifesto. What the party pledged in its manifesto was to replace the act with a 'fair and balanced industrial relations system' (NZLP, 1993c: 124). Labour aimed to redress the perceived imbalance of power between employers and employees in favour of the latter by introducing minimum wage protection for young workers, restoring statutory recognition to trade unions, requiring employers to bargain in good faith, and promoting collective bargaining. However, Labour made it clear that it would not restore compulsory unionism, blanket coverage and compulsory arbitration. In sum, the party's view was '[w]orkers and employers are equally important within the economy. Neither can succeed without the other' (NZLP, 1993c: 124).

Nevertheless, Caygill and Laidlaw's reported comments drew quick criticisms from the Council of Trade Unions (CTU). Its Secretary, Angela Foulks, stressed: 'The changes proposed by Labour are fundamental, not minor or marginal. This analysis of the CTU is agreed with by the Employers Federation, which opposes the changes very vigorously for that very reason' (Edwards, 1993c). Foulks' position was confirmed by Clark, the spokesperson of Labour. Describing the ECA as 'odious' and 'disastrous' (Edwards, 1993b), the deputy leader denied that the ECA was not as bad as it was initially thought. 'It is not my view. The only reason the industrial relations system has continued to function at all with ridiculous legislation is because most people are decent. Not everyone rushed to use the exploitative opportunities there but the Act is a charter to exploit' (Edwards, 1993c). The two MPs whose comments initiated this turmoil also confirmed Clark's viewpoint. 'The changes which the Labour Government will make are not cosmetic and we did not describe them as such, nor did we praise the act' (Edwards, 1993c). Clark further wrote to the CTU reaffirming her party's intention that '[t]he replacement legislation will proceed immediately after the election of a Labour government and as a deputy prime minister I will personally ensure that it has the highest legislative priority' (Edwards, 1993d).

In contrast to emphatic efforts from Clark (as well as Caygill and Laidlaw) to clarify the confusion over the ECA, Moore's endorsement was strangely absent. Despite the amount of media attention which this latest turmoil generated, and the party's clearly stated position over the act in the manifesto, Moore refused to confirm Labour's intention to repeal the ECA, allegedly for fear of upsetting big businesses<sup>93</sup> (Rudman, 1994). On 31 October, five days from the election day, Moore and Clark had a 'huge row' in the car on the way to a joint visit to a Petone factory where Clark planned to clarify the matter once and for all by releasing the party's industrial relations policy

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<sup>93</sup> For example, see Dearnaley (1993a and 1993b) for the Employers' Federation's views on the ECA and Labour's position.

(Street, interview, 1998). Moore was unwilling to release the policy because, according to a newspaper report, he wanted to rewrite some aspects of it (Laugesen, 1993d).

### **Clark's interest in the leadership**

The day after the argument, Moore called a final big press conference before the election. With the opinion polls unanimously predicting<sup>94</sup> National's victory, the emphasis at the conference was on the unity of the Labour leadership team. Sitting between Clark and Michael Cullen, Moore paid a tribute to his colleagues for 'their friendships, the lessons we have learnt together over the last three years'. Grabbing Clark's arm several times during the conference, Moore praised his deputy's ability, as if all the speculation about an internal split and his leadership future were totally groundless. 'We actually like each other, we agree with [sic] a common purpose for this country' (Laugesen, 1993d).

By this time, however, the differences between the two were irreconcilable. Following another change of hairdo, which had an effect in softening her cold and austere image<sup>95</sup> (Ferguson, 1993), on 27 October Clark for the first time positively expressed her interest in Moore's job. While declaring her total support for Moore by saying: 'Any speculation to the contrary is totally wrong' (Stone, 1993c), when she was asked by reporters about her action in case of Moore's resignation after the election defeat, Clark stated: 'I would be interested. Why wouldn't I be? But I'd have to consider my options' (Goulter, 1993d). She also added that her decision to stand for the leadership position would depend upon the level of support she could attract within the caucus.

I've watched people over the years seek the leadership and if one doesn't go into a leadership position with a lot of support behind one it is a very difficult and rocky road' (Stone, 1993c).

She re-confirmed her readiness for the top job slightly more strongly only three days before the election. Asked about her leadership ambition, her reply was:

It doesn't burn in my guts. If the opportunity came, yes of course I would do it but I wouldn't kill for it. (MacLennan, 1993)

In the wake of this speculation about Clark's leadership ambition, Moore publicly adopted a seemingly relaxed, understanding attitude. He almost endorsed her credentials as a future leader - providing that her succession was necessitated by his

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<sup>94</sup> For example, the *Time*-Morgan and TV3-Gallup polls released the day before the voting day both showed National's lead over Labour, by three and eight percent respectively. (Riddell, 1993b)

<sup>95</sup> Clark later explained her image change was to project an image externally which was closer to the impressions held by her close friends. (Goulter, 1993d)

voluntary resignation. 'Well, of course, Helen is a very talented person and why shouldn't she [stand for the position] if I decide to vacate the leadership?' 'I think she's terrific, I support her. People are realising how good she is and I've always known it'. His praise of Clark continued: 'She's great and I'm lucky to have her' (Munro, 1993a). Would he consider voluntary resignation so that his deputy could lead the party if Labour lost the election?

Well, I don't believe we will lose and when I want to talk about jobs, growth, education, I think it's foolish to worry about myself. It is not about me. It never has been. (Herbert, 1993a)

### **The increasing pressure on Moore**

Looking back at this period of time, Moore explains that in spite of his awareness of an organised movement to undermine his leadership, he had to put on a brave face and soldiered on in the crucial final days of the election campaign.

I heard rumours during the election campaign that people were cancelling meetings, that MPs were having meetings, instead of fighting the election, and they were meeting at people's houses, and cancelling meetings. Marginal MPs were saying where are these people? - they promised to come and see me. They were... and what they were doing was a group of them... ha (chuckle)... they were good actually to be fair... I would go and speak in an electorate in their area, people would be impressed or whatever, and then they would send someone behind me to say: 'Oh, Mike is erratic. Mike Moore didn't write that speech' or whatever, you know. So, I'd build up the good will, and then they would come in and drop a bucket on me. And there was a group of them all the time moving around the country... thinking about the leadership, not about the election. And journalists asked me about it, and I just bluffed my way through, saying: 'No, that is not happening.' (Moore, interview, 1998)

At the election (6 November), Labour's performance exceeded the common expectation. On election night, Labour won 46 seats (with 34.7% of the total votes) with National - 49 (35.2%); Alliance - 2 (18.3%), and New Zealand First - 2 (8.3%)<sup>96</sup>. As at least the results of three seats - Waitaki, Northern Maori, and Wellington-Karori - were still in question, it was not clear whether National could secure the outright majority. Probably encouraged by this unexpectedly better outcome for his own party, Moore made a highly emotive, almost victory speech. 'It will be a long night for [National Leader and Prime Minister] Mr Bolger and Miss Richardson, but it won't be as long and as cold a night as it has been for all the young people in this country since they were elected', with a concluding comment in a victorious tone: 'Hang on. Help is on the way'. Later, he declared that National had no moral authority to govern the country,

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<sup>96</sup> The final result after the special votes were counted was: National - 50 (35.0%); Labour - 45 (34.7%); Alliance - 2 (18.2%); and NZ First - 2 (8.4%). The result of the Waitaki seat, that was won by Labour on the election night, was overturned, and held by National.



adding: 'We have power because we have the largest percentage of votes' (Kilroy, 1993b). He demanded constitutional option papers, presumably prepared by the Justice Department, the Attorney-General, and the Cabinet Office for Jim Bolger, be handed over to him (Smith, 1993). Later on the same night, however, he was less confident, 'it is totally improper and wrong of someone to argue that they have a moral or political authority at this moment' (Kilroy, 1993b).

Unfortunately for Moore, his speech in front of live TV cameras was unfavourably compared with those made by his counterparts in the rival parties, Jim Bolger and Jim Anderton. These two leaders acted like statesmen, calling for calmness and guaranteeing a co-operative approach in Parliament. The promise of more co-operation seemed fittingly appropriate as the new MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) system, approved in the simultaneously held referendum as the new electoral mechanism from the 1996 election, was presumed to require such an approach. In contrast, the aggressive and politicised tone chosen by Moore in his speech was widely perceived as ill-timed and misjudged<sup>97</sup>.

Due to the closeness of the election result, it initially appeared that at least for the foreseeable future the incumbent leader was safe<sup>98</sup>. The atmosphere of the first Labour caucus meeting after the election held on 9 November was full of 'jubilation', according to one newspaper. 'There was a real crush in the caucus room, with plenty of kissing, hugging, and back-slapping' (Riddell, 1993d). The euphoria, however, disguised the strong discord felt by many caucus members. Two days before the caucus meeting, Lange made a stinging attack on Moore for his excessive personal influence on the party's election campaign (Lange, 1993a). The former leader was severely critical of: a) Labour's failure to distinguish itself from National by shying away from important, distinguishing issues for fear of upsetting the middle class; and b) the highly personalised election campaign. On both accounts, Lange held Moore responsible.

Lange was by no means the only Labour MP holding such views of Moore. Strong feelings of dissatisfaction with Moore had been steadily building up for a while, but they were at boiling point in the post-election caucus. Tizard recalls: 'I was quite stunned by the anger in the caucus, in the first caucus. And I thought: "Hell, what's happening here?"' (Tizard, interview, 1998). A leadership change now looked very real.

Moore's leadership was constantly discussed amongst many MPs and candidates as well as party members throughout the election campaign. His suitability as the leader and the question as to whether a leadership change was desirable in the future were often raised in their conversations. For example, Steve Maharey notes:

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<sup>97</sup> For the contents of his speech, see Smith (1993).

<sup>98</sup> See Riddell (1993c) and Kilroy (1993b).

People certainly talked about the worries they had about what it would be like for him to be Prime Minister [and] what the party would be [like] and how it would work, who would be in Cabinet, all of those issues were buzzing right through the election campaign and caused a lot of instability because they were there. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

In some cases, it is reported that a more direct approach than having general discussions was made to a few candidates during the campaign. For instance, Jill White, a new intake, contends that during the campaign one incumbent MP asked her about a preferred leader (White, interview, 1998). Another MP says at the height of the election campaign: 'A party activist from Christchurch came to visit me in my campaign headquarters in \*\*\*\*\* on the pretext that he was coming down to do some canvassing, but in reality he mostly wanted to sound out whether I would support a move to change the leadership immediately after the election' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

Nevertheless, any suggestion of a large-scale, long-contrived anti-Moore campaign prior to the election has been vigorously denied by those in favour of a change<sup>99</sup>. Ruth Dyson, who later ran the numbers for Clark (Street, interview, 1998), admits that there were lively and frequent discussions amongst the fellow new candidates about Moore's leadership problems during the election campaign. Yet, she maintains, it was far from an organised plot.

You know, in the weeks leading into the election, people were saying, you know, how are we going to cope with the next three years, there isn't much more upfront discussion. And then, in the last few days leading into the election and on election night, particularly... Mike's speech on election night really...really unsettled a lot of people, making [them] very nervous about what was going to happen. A number of caucus members just said: 'Well, he has to go. We have to have a change of Leader.' (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Another 1993 Clark supporter agrees:

... my recollection is that we had discussed his erratic behaviour for quite some time leading up to the actual election. But in fact no decision to replace him as Leader occurred till after the election, that was when the final decision was made. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

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<sup>99</sup> Whether the anti-group was actively undermining Moore's leadership during the election campaign in view of a leadership challenge against him after the election was, and still is, contentious. Many Moore supporters firmly believe(d) that was the case. Caygill acknowledges the presence of strong resentment towards the leader before the election, which worked as a catalyst for the challenge in 1993. However, while having no knowledge of the coup movement before the election, he questions the feasibility of active undermining of the Party Leader during the election campaign. 'I don't think that people actively worked to undermine Mike. I think in fact it is hard to see how, in an election campaign, they really could do that without risking their own defeat' (Caygill, interview, 1998).

### **The emerging inevitability of a leadership change**

There is no doubt that some had reached the conclusion even long before the election that Moore was unsuitable to lead the Labour Party and needed to be replaced at some stage in the future. They, sometimes explicitly, expressed their convictions to others prior to and during the election campaign. As a result, they knew who else shared those views, which loosely formed a foundation for a coup. However, it was only after the election that a wider group (including Maryan Street) were contacted formally regarding their positions to discuss the leadership. Then, according to Steve Maharey, '[t]he question... was seldom "should it happen?", it was "when will it happen?", "how will it happen?"... those kind of things were in discussion' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

As the level of criticism against Moore heightened, a question about the credibility of his leadership in relation to his leadership succession re-surfaced. The anti-Moore people often asked among themselves 'why Mike became Leader in the first place anyway.' To which the answer was: 'Well, who would have wanted to be Leader in 1990? No-one but Mike'. Due to the circumstances of his leadership succession, which took place while the caucus majority still supported Palmer, the legitimacy of Moore's position came under question. 'So, he kind of came in without the kind of feeling that this is a person who people had said: "Yes [we] want you", in you come. I think that helped undermine him a bit' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

Even after the core anti-Moore group recognised the inevitability of a leadership change, the transition of the frustration, felt by some MPs with Moore, into a coup organisation was by no means automatic. Between 1990 and 1993, the caucus left group provided a forum for discussion of the Moore leadership and Labour's policy direction under him. Although the majority of this group were now among the core coup supporters, one MP, Liz Tennet, decided to depart from it. She explains her decision in the following terms:

I held some concerns on policy development under Mr Moore's leadership, but never on his leadership per se. I was working with the coup group on policy issues to ensure that Labour did not shift its thrust to the Right.

Once I learnt that the extended agenda was to depose Mr Moore as leader, I was mortified, as I recognised Mr Moore was the most popular political leader in NZ at that time. As a result, I was never involved at any stage in any move to oust him as leader. (Tennet, 1998)

Within the remaining group, a number of private meetings and telephone conferences were organised to further debate a potential challenge against Moore.

### **Clark as the alternative**

Unfortunately for Moore, unlike the previous occasions in the past few years when his leadership became a discussion point, this time the anti-Moore group fulfilled two

crucial conditions for a successful leadership change, ie, political will (and numbers) to carry out a coup, and an alternative candidate in Helen Clark. Although the role which Clark played in the actual organisation of the leadership change after the election was described as 'not at all' by one of the key members (Dyson, interview, 1998)<sup>100</sup>, some of the group members were privately confident about her availability as a candidate if enough support for her was found in the caucus.

Nevertheless, Clark was not an automatic, unanimous choice. For example, during the election campaign, Maharey was accused of plotting against Moore. The evidence put forward was his personal diary (which fell into the hands of another MP's secretary) in which he drew 'a kind of a dream team for Labour' - an ideal Labour Cabinet line-up. According to Maharey, the list was innocently made up while he was waiting at an airport; 'a doodle of a pissed-off person', and was the result of the frustration he felt with Labour's campaign. The top position of the list went to Lange (Maharey, interview, 1998).

However, the former leader was not a preferred choice by many. As Street points out, his outspokenness was a factor which worked against him.

Yes, there was an approach to bring back David... People admired him enormously. And I'm personally extremely fond of David and remain very fond of him. But he had been too critical too often. (Street, interview, 1998)

The finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen was another name mentioned in the debate although interestingly, Cullen asserts that he was not approached by anyone for the leadership position in 1993 (Cullen, interview, 1998). According to Dyson:

The only real discussion that anyone had about [someone] other than Helen was Michael Cullen. Quite a few people discussed the option of Michael... But I think in the end, it just... didn't pick up any traction... There wasn't a faction that

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<sup>100</sup> To substantiate Dyson's assertion, Tizard says that she and Clark were holidaying in Fiji on the latter's suggestion for a week after the first caucus while crucial talks were held amongst the anti-Moore group. According to Tizard, Clark was concerned about Labour's performance at the election. However, she adds that apart from a daily fax containing general news, Clark was not engaged in any other communication, thus concluding: 'I saw no coordination. I mean she certainly was not running it [the coup]' (Tizard, interview, 1998). Exactly how deeply Clark was involved in the preliminary discussions of the leadership change prior to the election is unclear. Clark herself denied any knowledge of the coup before the election in a radio interview. She said: 'I don't think anybody could sensibly accuse me of anything less than total and full commitment to the return of a Labour Government in 1993... I can assure you that I was full-time on the election campaign working for the election of the Labour Government with the leadership which it had had' (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 2 December 1993). Yet, Maharey states: 'whilst I would regard myself as one of the people who probably was crucial to the change of leader, in the actual five days, there was obviously a lot of discussion that I was never part of over that longer lead-up period, otherwise, Helen wouldn't have been available to be leader. So, people must have done a lot of talking about who would take over, and whether she was the alternative, most of which was not something I was involved in' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

voted on it or anything like that, you know. It just didn't pick up enough support. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Why did Cullen fail to gain the nod? His position as a declared Moore supporter and his lack of enthusiasm to replace him (Cullen, interview, 1998) surely counted against him. Also, for some, Cullen was viewed not as well equipped for the top position as Clark in terms of his personality. One MP explains:

...I've worked with Michael quite a lot and like him a lot, but I never... I've never really put him in the same league as Helen. He's not as focused... not as single minded as Helen. He hasn't got the same sort of drive and I think you need an extraordinary drive to be the leader. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

After a while, the choice was naturally narrowed down to Clark. At a meeting held on 9 November, following the first caucus meeting, although absent from the meeting, Clark sent a message to the pro-leadership change group in which she expressed her intention (for the first time for some attendees) to challenge Moore before Christmas. It was also agreed at the meeting that those MPs would lobby on behalf of the challenger (Lange, 1993b).

### **The timing of the challenge**

The timing of the leadership change (to take place before Christmas) was determined by the Clark supporters on four grounds. Firstly, while the Government's majority seemed shaky, a snap election was regarded as possible. Since the speculation of Moore's future had been around for a while, the Government may have tried to capitalise on Labour's increasing disarray. Also, the Clark camp was acutely aware of the presence of the Alliance, and the threat it could pose to Labour. Although the party's number of Parliamentary seats increased greatly, it was assisted by National's more dramatic loss of support and the systematic bias of the then electoral system which did not translate third parties' increased popularity into the seat allocation. In this sense, the real 'winner' which emerged at the election was the minor parties including the Alliance (Levine and Roberts, 1994a: 142). The Clark supporters felt it necessary to establish a new leadership as soon as possible to counter this political force that was believed to be growing at the expense of Labour (Macpherson, 1994). In Clark's words:

If we had waited until February next year then the Labour party would have drifted, unable to cope with the nonsense from the Alliance all year, still falling between two stools as we had been. (Kilroy, 1994)

Secondly, the Clark supporters feared that if given sufficient time, Moore would have consolidated his position so that any leadership attempt would not have been feasible. Maharey, who respects Moore's energy and work capacity notes:

... if you leave someone like Mike who is a very good organiser to start off again, then he will immediately. He's a high performance person, he'll hit the ground running after Christmas with a program for the year, he'd have contacted people who had committed money, and that will mean anybody who's trying to start again will be unplugging lots of things, and would make it difficult for them. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Dyson was also concerned about the organisational impact of a leadership change.

...if we left things as they were, then Mike would get all his office set up, get staff set up, they would be on contracts... and that over the summer period, everyone would sort of get set back into their organisation mode with Mike as the leader, and that's quite difficult to... it's much more unsettling to change, you know. It would [have] still happened in the same way, but it [would have disrupted] a lot more of Parliament if we [had] left it, like the staff changes... if you remove a whole body of staff, which you do when you change leaders, it's very destabilising for people. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

So, when they realised that they had enough numbers on their side to topple the leader, 'the consensus rapidly developed: "Well, it's not going to be easy, but do it...now"' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

Thirdly, Clark's proponents thought that a change in early December would provide the new leadership with a timely break over Christmas, during which any disquietedness incurred by the challenge would have time to settle. With such a break, Clark should be able to start the new year with a clean slate. Dyson attests: 'So, we thought that if we did it before Christmas, then maybe over the Christmas and summer period, people would settle down when they came back with their few rifts healed, then they could get on with the job' (Dyson, interview, 1998). If the coup had been postponed until the beginning of 1994, it could have risked damaging the new leadership by allowing the impact of the potentially messy event to linger on for rest of the year. Clark explained: 'I just think it would have got messier and messier... if it hadn't been resolved it would have become a running sore' (Kilroy, 1994)

Fourthly, there was a rumour in the Labour caucus that in early 1994 the Cullen-King team would challenge the Moore regime<sup>101</sup>. Although the Clark supporters were unable to verify the rumour, to elect Clark as the leader, it was necessary to pre-empt any possible challenge with another candidate. For instance, one 1993 leadership change proponent comments: 'I did hear of that and yes that *was* a precipitating factor... in timing. Because the rumour was that they were contemplating something in February' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

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<sup>101</sup> Both Cullen and King denied their leadership ambitions at that time. Cullen says with laughter: 'The only person I know who promoted that idea was one [political journalist] Chris Trotter who was totally wrong' (Cullen, interview, 1998). King is more vocal. 'Absolutely incorrect. I never... I'd never considered challenging Mike Moore for Leader, it didn't enter my head to challenge Mike Moore, it never entered my head that anyone else would challenge him, either' (King, interview, 1998).

It is important to stress that the decision on the timing, made by the core Clark supporters, surprised and in some cases raised eyebrows amongst other Clark sympathisers, when they were informed of the coup. Jill White says: 'I don't think I was aware until about that time [the second caucus meeting] that a leadership change was imminent although I had a pretty good feeling that there would be leadership change somewhere, you know, in the next two, three months perhaps' (White, interview, 1998). Caygill's response was even more cautious. When told of the planned leadership challenge, he warned the coup organisers:

'I think that you're moving too quickly... that Mike did not campaign well. He behaved badly in the immediate aftermath of the elections. There is not a lot of support for him either within the party or publicly. But don't underestimate his support, either. If you act too quickly, it will look bad. I think you ought to give him time. He's not likely to stand down on his own initiative. But it will look better if we act with less haste...' (Caygill, interview, 1998)

The then Junior Whip, Larry Sutherland, who himself predicted a coup 'somewhere around April' 1994, acknowledges that the timing was controversial. While carefully avoiding stating his own position at the time, he interprets why some disagreed on the virtue of the timing being so close to the election:

... I would think that we had only just had an election. Yes, sometimes that is an opportune time to change a leader. But I guess... their thinking was: 'Well, we need time to think. We need time to actually work out where we are going from here as the Labour Party caucus. If there is some dissatisfaction with Mike's leadership, then there should be an opportunity for this caucus to actually discuss that. And if there is... if he is given an ultimatum... opportunity with an ultimatum to change certain positions, or consider certain members of the caucus in terms of their standing of where they should be, then he should be given an ultimatum... And if he finds that difficult, then he knows the ultimate situation is that he is going to face a leadership challenge'. That's a very nice way of it all ending. If you are going to have a leadership [change], that's the nicest way it could happen. The problem is that whilst there are people who probably thought that way, there are others who think that you always strike when the iron is hot, and the quicker you do something, the better.' (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

Nevertheless, once these decisions were made, the momentum for a leadership change increased and the pressure quickly mounted on Moore. On 12 November, he faced the New Zealand Council, the ruling body of the NZLP, where he was questioned about his behaviour during the campaign. Moore explained his now well-known speech on election night in the following words.

Other than one war whoop on election night by me where I was speaking to my people in the electorate and ignored the cameras – [all of] which I learned from again - we have displayed the stability, the maturity and security that is necessary. (Kilroy, 1993c)

Prior to the second caucus meeting on 23 November, more MPs had been contacted about the coming challenge. Richard Northey who made a return to Parliament at the 1993 election after the three-year absence recollects:

I first realised a leadership challenge was on at a meeting of centre and left Labour MPs the night before the second caucus meeting, after the 1993 election. We decided to use the review of the 1993 campaign, which was a major part of that caucus meeting agenda, to make pointed criticisms of aspects of the campaign, with the intention that this criticism would lead to an open review of the Party leadership at a subsequent caucus meeting. (Northey, 1998b)

The agreed strategy for the next day was that about a dozen people would talk about their concerns about the leader to test the wider feelings at the caucus. If sympathetic feelings towards a leadership change were prevalent, then a formal approach would be made to Moore in person in an attempt to persuade him to step down voluntarily (Maharey, interview, 1998).

Therefore, it was not surprising that the mood of the second caucus meeting, where Labour's election performance was discussed<sup>102</sup>, was entirely different from the first. The rejoicing was replaced by criticisms directed at Moore. In his words:

People were attacking me for running an overtly heterosexual campaign, for using helicopters. Nothing I had done was right. They did me over in more than two hours of organised speaking lists. (C. Moore, 1994)

It was apparent that in addition to MPs, the party officials, who were also attending the meeting<sup>103</sup>, had lost faith in the leader.

While attacks continued, I passed the general secretary a note, asking him to speak in the debate. He looked straight through me. When I finally called on him to speak on fund-raising, his response was to say that I had had too much authority in that area. (C. Moore, 1994)

Despite Moore's surprise, the meeting did not go as planned for the Clark supporters, either. Although Maharey and Dalziel together with other members stood up and expressed their concerns and general views of the leader, some members who had promised to join them changed their minds at the meeting. Maharey is philosophical: 'Because politics is a tough game... but only some people are tough, and a lot of the people who were tough in discussions outside the room weren't so brave inside it' (Maharey, interview, 1998). As a consequence of those members' hesitation, the caucus meeting was at best 'inconsequential', with Moore probably leaving the room

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<sup>102</sup> Moore submitted to the caucus his report on the campaign and a planned strategy for the next three years in Parliament. See Moore (1993e).

<sup>103</sup> The Party General Secretary, together with the President, is allowed to attend weekly caucus meetings. Like the President, s/he has no voting rights.



'of the opinion that people had had a bit of an airing and it had all gone nowhere' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

Nevertheless, the tension went up immediately within the caucus. Some MPs, who had not been involved in the previous discussions (thus likely to be Moore supporters), were astonished and angered at their colleagues' attack on Moore so shortly after the election. Within the pro-Clark group, there was also discontent. At a meeting held on the evening of the second caucus meeting, which was attended by the majority of the caucus, some concerns were expressed. For example, Maharey recalls:

I said to people: 'Look, in my opinion people didn't say what they believed [at the caucus meeting]. Maybe that's an indication that people are not committed. We can't change leaders if people are not committed. My feeling is that we put it off. That's it.' You know, I suppose I was reacting a bit to the fact that I had been one of the ones who had said things and felt a little kind of 'miffed' with people, well, not miffed, but a bit aware that other people hadn't (said anything)... And therefore you wonder about a kind of ability to see things through. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Such pessimism was overridden by the desire to see a leadership change. It was agreed that two MPs were to see Moore as delegates to convey their position: 'It's [your leadership is] not going to work. You should step down' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

The following day, 24 November, Maharey was asked by the concerned leader to clarify the intention of the previous day's caucus meeting. Assuming that the two delegates had already accomplished their given task, the MP for Palmerston North simply stated that things were 'wrong' and 'I think you should take it that there is a lot of dissatisfaction. People like me had voiced it.' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

On 25 November, the news of a potential leadership challenge by Clark started circulating in the media. While initial reactions from Labour MPs were denial, they admitted that there were some rumblings within the caucus (*The Dominion*, 25 November 1993, p.2). Moore's immediate response signalled that any challenge against him would be met with a determined fight. 'I want to remain leader and make Labour the major political force in this country. I have fought all my life for the interests of ordinary people and the country. I will continue to fight for what I believe in' (Riddell, 1993e).

### **The unfolding of the coup**

On 26 November, Clark's challenge became official. In the absence of the Senior Whip, Jonathan Hunt, the newly elected Junior Whip, Larry Sutherland innocently<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Traditionally, Whips are expected to deny any knowledge of leadership challenge (Kilroy, 1993d). Sutherland looks back and recalls that it was: 'the worst possible time to take over as a Junior Whip' (Sutherland, interview, 1998).

admitted to the media that he had been formally informed that morning by an MP that there would be a challenge against Moore, although the exact timing of the challenge was not notified (Kilroy, 1993d). With some of the key supporters for the Clark camp being identified at the early stage (eg, Steve Maharey, Lianne Dalziel, Judith Tizard, Ruth Dyson and Party President, Maryan Street<sup>105</sup>), hostility quickly flared up.

Despite persistent rumours about a leadership coup, Moore was rather unprepared when it actually materialised. Almost one year after the leadership change, he recalled:

I'd spent a couple of weeks after the last election visiting all the frontline seats, starting negotiations with possible partners in coalitions, so I really didn't know what was going on and I was foolish enough to believe the assurances of some of the participants. (Kilroy, 1994)

His feeling of surprise was soon replaced by despair and anger. The absence of a formal warning from the Clark camp aggravated the situation; the two delegates never arrived. 'That pain and division would not have existed had these people come to see me, or had a leadership challenge been done in the conventional, traditional way<sup>106</sup>' (Moore, 1998).

I was never formally informed. Still haven't been. Still waiting for the phone call... I thought there would be a challenge by... at the end of the year<sup>107</sup>, you know. That's the nature of politics. And Labour history and traditions is that you go and tell the person, you know... When Bill Rowling was challenged, you go along and say, 'look we've got the numbers'. There's dignity in this. This is how you can go. This is where it lines up. But you had people who had never been sworn into Parliament... we had the biggest number of new MPs in 93 that we had ever had. Bigger than 1935, bigger than 1972. Somebody must have done something right [to enable so many newcomers elected into Parliament]. (Moore, interview, 1998)

According to Moore, he was not just kept uninformed; some MPs who had closely worked with him deliberately lied about what was going on when questioned by the leader. They told him that there would be no challenge.

... a couple of staff members... whom I employed as staff... were working for them.... you know one or some of them I'd helped get into Parliament. I said to one: 'I may not deserve your vote as a leader. But at least I deserve [honesty], seeing I've employed you for three years, helped you get a seat, made life easy for you, raised money for you, spoken for you, had you in my house. I may not

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<sup>105</sup> See Herbert (1993b).

<sup>106</sup> In 1994, Moore told a reporter: 'If they had sent someone I respected to tell me that it was time to go for the sake of myself and the party, I might have accepted it' (C. Moore, 1994). David Caygill, however, doubts that Moore's reaction would have been any different if the leadership challenge had taken place under different circumstances. 'I've known him longer than I've known Helen - I don't doubt that he would have fought vigorously no matter what. If the decision had been delayed until early next year, until 1994, it would still have been represented as a betrayal by his supporters and Mike would still have felt betrayed' (Caygill, interview, 1998).

<sup>107</sup> Elsewhere, he said: 'I was never aware of the full extent of the situation... I assumed that this one would take place earlier this year [1994]' (C. Moore, 1994).

deserve your vote, but at least I deserve to be told. If I do not deserve to be told, I don't deserve to be lied to, and told it was not happening.' But they did. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Even some Clark supporters felt incensed. Maharey, for example, referred to his two delegated colleagues' behaviour as 'unethical'.

... I think probably Mike... anybody in that position probably has reason to be...for feeling hurt about that... Instead of having some people come and say: 'Now look, mate, time to go', he was placed in a position of kind of hearing this second-hand, third-hand, through the media and so on. Which of course, I guess, made him defensive straight away, rather than being able to say to someone: 'OK, I'll think about it.' or 'Yes, I'll go'. And, you know, those opportunities were almost not there. So, there was that vacuum I think which caused a problem at the beginning. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

No matter how remote it could have been, any chance of an amicable and peaceful leadership transition was now lost. As one journalist put it, [w]hat might have been a surgical removal has turned into a bloody battle' (Laugesen, 1993e). The divisions between the two camps worsened severely. Hostility expressed by not only Moore but his supporters was clearly visible. For example, Annette King, a former Minister under the fourth Labour Government<sup>108</sup>, recalls her reactions when she learned of the coup:

[T]hey made a liar of me. I had campaigned that he [Moore] was the man that could be Prime Minister of New Zealand. I told voters that. I stood on the platform and said: 'This man should be the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Mike Moore will blah, blah.' And three weeks later, we had people in our caucus who had gone out saying: 'This man should be Leader' say: 'He is not good enough to be the Leader of the Opposition.' I felt it was a betrayal of the voters. I felt I had been made a liar, and I felt that I did not have enough reasons why we should change a leader a few weeks after an election. (King, interview, 1998)

### **Moore's fight for survival**

Once the coup attempt was known, Moore promptly strengthened his resolve to fight off his deputy's challenge, despite knowing that he did not have the numbers to retain his position (Moore, interview, 1998<sup>109</sup>). 'There will be no resignation'. 'I won't give up without a fight' (Riddell, 1993f). Unlike Clark who initially declined to comment publicly on the leadership challenge and left the rallying to her supporters, Moore opted for an open, highly public fight. A press conference was hastily organised on 26 November, where Moore, accompanied by his wife, Yvonne<sup>110</sup>, initiated his counter-attack against the coup.

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<sup>108</sup> She was the Minister of Employment, Youth Affairs, Immigration as well as Minister assisting Prime Minister.

<sup>109</sup> Moore says that he realised his likely fate 'a week before' the caucus vote (Moore, interview, 1998).

<sup>110</sup> Yvonne Moore, together with some of Moore's personal staff such as Clayton Cosgrove and Barry Ebert played a prominent role in Moore's fight to retain the leadership (Laugesen, 1993e). For Yvonne Moore's view on the coup against her husband, see Dekker and O'Leary (1993).

Moore's tactics were two-fold. Firstly, he attempted to present the challenge as a 'classic, unfortunate misjudgment' caused by some MPs' negligence of what 'people' want. Thus, his advice was to 'get away from the intoxication and loneliness of Wellington' and consult their constituents (*The Dominion*, 27 November 1993, p.1).

I just simply want the members of Parliament to visit clubs, go to the clubs, ask the people, and for new MPs to show some humility, not to launch new and glittering careers on the basis that we know best, and not to launch the new political system with the oldest trick' (*The Dominion*, 27 November 1993, p.1).

This message, seemingly aimed at the new 1993 intake - many of them were reportedly either supporting Clark or wavering (*The Dominion*, 27 November 1993, p.1) - was synchronised by Moore's call to the public to express their support for him at their local Labour MPs' offices. His decision to directly appeal to the public over the heads of the caucus and the party hierarchy was both strategic and chosen out of necessity. As already noted, Moore had constantly enjoyed strong personal popularity, and his popular appeal was a distinct advantage over Clark who had been rated poorly in the polls. Also, no career minded politician can afford to be insensitive to the opinions expressed by their constituents<sup>111</sup>. The cost of doing so could be the loss of their seats at the next election. For a more practical reason, Moore had to go over the head of the party hierarchy because he simply did not have support there<sup>112</sup> (this point is to be discussed more in detail in the next chapter).

The second tactic Moore employed was to portray the challenge as an act of treachery against the selfless leader who had been working hard for Labour values. In order to mobilise his 'grass roots' popular support, he explained the whole event in simplistic, almost hero versus villain terms<sup>113</sup>. Moore argued that he was not fighting for himself, he was defending the ideals of the Labour Party from disrespectful, untrustworthy individuals. 'Ideological issues and matters of great principle are involved. This is not merely a battle of personalities' (Herbert, 1993b). 'It is deep... it is a battle about the philosophy and direction of the Labour Party' (Gardner, 1993). An extra effort was made to discredit the personal integrity of the coup organisers and to condemn the way they were conducting the challenge. 'It is the first time in the history of the Labour movement that people have been unable to look you in the eye and front.' 'The quality I admire is courage, frankness. If people can't embrace that, what kind of

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<sup>111</sup> Moore was reported to have spoken to newly elected members and their local party people to remind them that they owed him their electoral success (Armstrong, 1993c).

<sup>112</sup> A former National Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, used the same tactic when his leadership came under threat in 1980. At that time, like Moore in 1993, Muldoon was enjoying wider and more reliable support outside the caucus than inside it (Gustafson, 1997c).

<sup>113</sup> This point was well exemplified by a comment made by Yvonne Moore, who actively helped her husband's bid to retain the leadership. Talking about the people in the Clark camp, she said: 'If they were auditioning for the role of Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar they would be sure to get it' (Drinnan, 1993).

party is that?' 'I am angry that colleagues would not look me in the face. These are not the values of New Zealand' (Armstrong, 1993c). Moore stressed the 'non-representative' character of the Clark supporters. He described them as a group that 'represents nobody', a group which 'go out to dinner together and think the country is the people they drink with' (Drinnan, 1993).

As a reference to the university-educated, liberal and middle-class backgrounds of many of the Clark supporters, the term 'Chardonnay socialists' was frequently used by Moore, which contrasted with his own, humble, working-class background. Combined with the claim that the coup organisers - including both MPs and party officials, Street and Party Secretary, Tony Timms - who were lobbying against Moore during the election campaign while he was working for the party, Moore effectively created the image of the leadership challenge as having being orchestrated in a cunning manner by cold-blooded plotters.

If they had spent more time building up the Labour Party rather than lobbying and giving 'Chardonnay' parties then we might have been in government now. (Underhill, 1993: A1).

Also repeatedly emphasised was the fact that his phone calls and fax messages to Clark asking her to contact him had not been returned. 'It's a great way to start - in hiding. This is not the way to launch a career which is supposed to end in Premier House [the Prime Minister's residence]' (Armstrong, 1993c). He suggested that he still remained open to public reconciliation with the Clark camp. Such a reconciliation was to be followed by the caucus decision on the leadership (Frinnan, 1993) although it was highly questionable whether any reconciliation, satisfactory to both parties, was realistically achievable. 'Call me, ring me collect, my number has not changed'<sup>114</sup> (Drinnan, 1993).

Moore's strategy produced mixed results. On the one hand, it provoked a groundswell of sympathy for him from the general public. According to Yvonne Moore's estimate, between 30,000 and 40,000 people contacted him, plus there were 3,000 or 4,000 telephone messages in support for the threatened leader (Dekker and O'Leary, 1993). A similar response was reaching the other Labour MPs across the country; many local electorate offices reported being flooded with calls overwhelmingly supporting Moore. For example, Jack Elder describes the levels of support which he canvassed for two leadership contenders around this time in the following terms.

I had listened to my Electorate Committee. Like most MPs, my Electorate Committee was absolutely, rabidly, pro-Mike and anti-Helen. I had soundings through our membership, people contacting my office... there were about three or

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<sup>114</sup> In response to this call, Clark was reported to have said that she had spoken to Moore twice on 17 and 18 November regarding the leadership challenge. Moore denied this, maintaining that their discussions only concerned the agenda for the next caucus meetings (Edwards, 1993g).

four different ways that people let me know what their opinion was, and the rough score I kept was something like 303 for Mike and 3 for Helen. And I'm quite serious. It was of that nature. Now I'm quite serious, it was of that nature, now, given the nature of the contest, you would expect it to be one-sided. But that wasn't one-sided. That was a whitewash in anyone's language. I had absolutely no doubt what the public reaction would be<sup>115</sup>. (Elder, interview, 1998)

Given this huge public backlash, the Moore camp claimed that a sufficient number of wavering MPs had switched sides to consolidate Moore's position in the caucus (Herbert, 1993c; Rentoul and Burns, 1993). In a radio interview on 26 November, asked whether he had the numbers in the caucus, Moore's reply was swift and straightforward: 'I believe so, of course'. In fact, his confidence was such that he even promised to support another leader if the caucus chose to depose him (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 26 November 1993). To boost the leader's confidence further, three Maori MPs (Peter Tapsell, Whetu Terikatene-Sullivan, Koro Wetere), Geoff Braybrooke, and a first term MP, Damien O'Connor publicly declared their support for the leader.

### **The Clark camp's counterattack**

On the other hand, Moore's strategy to mount personal attacks on the key Clark supporters while portraying himself as an innocent victim agitated some members<sup>116</sup>. Clark, coming out of a self-imposed silence on 27 November<sup>117</sup>, condemned the leader's behaviour as evidence of his problems, because of which many caucus members were wanting him to be replaced (Edwards, 1993g). In fact, it was suggested (contrary to the Moore supporters' claim) by her camp that some wavering MPs were converted in favour of the challenger, due to Moore's manner of public and ugly counter-attack<sup>118</sup>. His readiness to defend his position even at the potential cost of severely damaging the party gave some substance to Clark's claim that under his leadership: 'I don't think the party has been coming first' (Edwards, 1993g). Dyson affirms:

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<sup>115</sup> Also, see Mackenzie (1993a).

<sup>116</sup> Some members of the public picketed outside two of the prominent Clark supporters' house with placards linking the coup to their alleged sexuality. Moore distanced himself from those activities. In his autobiography, he mentioned the rude behaviour of some National Party supporters which he and his wife had to endure on the night of the 1975 election (at which he was defeated). Then he wrote: 'I was staggered by the depth of their hatred and determined then that if I got back I would never allow my supporters to be as ugly, rude or threatening' (Moore, 1993b: 50)

<sup>117</sup> From this day until the caucus vote on 1 December, the fight between Moore and Clark was a very public affair. Clark appeared on talkback radio, television news, current affairs programme and contacted reporters. Moore too continued his public campaign. The day before the caucus vote, he returned to a shoe factory at which he had been warmly received during his election campaign visit. (Munro, 1993b).

<sup>118</sup> A newly selected MP and Clark supporter, Janet Mackey, for example stated: 'All the people I have talked to have been level-headed. Really it is only Mike Moore who is playing the political game' (*The Otago Daily Times*, 1 December 1993, p.4).

I don't think anyone anticipated the venom of Mike's response in the campaign that he ran. I think most of us were just astonished that someone who professed so much loyalty to the party could be so destructive. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Clark also rejected Moore's self-portrayal as 'the sole repository of Labour values', emphasising that although not known for showing her emotion publicly, she too cared about the plight of the disadvantaged (Herbert, 1993c).

The Moore camp's determination to fight to the bitter end provoked an unusual reaction from the Party President, who was conventionally supposed to stand by the incumbent leaders. On 27 November, Street wrote a letter to Moore<sup>119</sup>, in which she advised him to step down voluntarily for the sake of the party. In the letter,

I paid tribute to him for the things he had achieved, and then I was brutally honest with him and told him that I didn't think he was the person to take us through into MMP...(Street, interview, 1998)

Street also clarified her position on the issue publicly through the media.

... I made that clear in a radio interview at one point during the leadership struggle in November 93. I made that clear, and I said that: 'Look, I have to work with whomever the caucus elects. I don't have a vote in this. But, my view was that for the benefit of the party, Mike should not be the leader any more'. So in that sense, I was still acting within my remit as President of the party, doing what I thought was necessary to protect the party's interest. (Street, interview, 1998)

On reflection, Street admits, 'it could be argued that I over-stepped my role as President, because a President has to live with, work with whomever - because of our rules - whomever the caucus elects as the leader; the President has to work with them'. However, she, by this stage convinced of Clark's victory, felt that Moore's angry and desperate response was so detrimental to the party that she was left with no choice but resort to public disassociation from him<sup>120</sup>.

...unlike his predecessors, he didn't stand down. David [Lange] stood down. Geoffrey [Palmer] stood down. Even though they were being strong-armed from behind, they stood down. They didn't... for the sake of the party, they didn't take it to a fight. Well, Mike did. He took it to a fight and damaged the party hugely in the process. He would argue that those of us who toppled him did the damage. But, when the writing was on the wall, and the caucus numbers are not going your

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<sup>119</sup> Street also sent a copy of the letter to Clark. An angry Moore responded to the letter by threatening to release it to the media unless she agreed to do so herself. The then President refused to succumb to the threat, believing that the letter was good and that its public release would only reflect badly on the leader. Moore never did carry out this threat. (Street, interview, 1998)

<sup>120</sup> So, why did Moore decide to continue fighting, if he knew that he did not have sufficient support to retain his position? Moore's reply to this question is: 'Of course colleagues would have wanted me to stand down without a fight, they had fought by "talking abuse around the Gallery" and denigrating me. It's the old story, one side wants to fight and then hopes the other side doesn't fight back. I fought because that is my nature. I know nothing else other than fighting, which is, I know, a weakness'. 'I did fight to the last minute. I fought possibly in an inadequate way, but if it was good enough for them to go on TV explaining my appalling weaknesses, which were apparent to everyone, surely I should have defended myself.' (Moore, 1998)

way, what is the point in fighting to the death? What do you gain for the party? And clearly, in fact, he gained nothing for the party. (Street, interview, 1998)

Another consequence of Moore's public fight-back was that it compelled some Clark supporters to publicly justify the necessity of the leadership change. This was done on several accounts. Firstly, it was emphasised that a leadership challenge was a legitimate right of the Labour Party. Therefore, labelling it as some form of treacherous act simply ignored this fact. As Clark put it:

I do not intend either to engage in a slanging match with Mr Moore. I call on him to respect the constitutional right of the Labour caucus to determine who should lead it. (Rentoul, 1993a)

Secondly, problems with Moore's leadership were elaborated on by the Clark supporters. Probably the most stinging criticism of Moore in this regard came from Lange. In his letter sent to eight caucus members, he indicated that the leader lacked both the temperament and judgement required by the job. He went on to say:

He campaigned as if the party were his property. His egocentric manner alienated many quite needlessly. He now denigrates the very people whom he is supposed to lead. Mike's response to a likely challenge suggests he would rather see the party wrecked than allowing [sic] members of the caucus to determine the leadership. (Rentoul, 1993a)

Thirdly, Moore's failure to distinguish Labour's policy position clearly as an alternative to National in the election was again pointed out. Examples of the leader deliberately having tried to 'fudge' certain critical issues such as the industrial relations policy were provided by both Clark (Rentoul, 1993b) and the CTU (Herbert, 1993d). The former stated:

The argument is really about social democracy versus conservatism. I have a very clear commitment to equality of opportunity, and I believe that poverty - straight, old-fashioned poverty - is something we were not able to campaign on effectively during the election<sup>121</sup>. (Underhill, 1993: A1)<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Several years later, Moore angrily denies that some of his policy views were induced by the fear of upsetting business - a view held by some Clark supporters. Moore was particularly incensed by Clark's claim regarding poverty. 'To say you don't care... about poverty is a bit rich coming from middle class people who have never been poor themselves. I KNOW about bloody poverty (see Chapter 1). They don't. It's not for me a technical theory, you know.' 'When they said [they] are tackling poverty, what did they mean by that? Their answer to poverty is to increase taxes and increase benefits. Yes, I didn't say we would increase benefits back to the pre-level. No, I would not say that'. (Moore, interview, 1998)

<sup>122</sup> As seen, Moore also indicated that the leadership challenge was not about personalities but the policy direction of the party. He asserted: 'There are strong ideological positions between myself and Helen Clark' (Edwards, 1993e). However, unlike Clark, Moore did not clarify their ideological differences.



The CTU, with no voting power within the caucus<sup>123</sup>, changed its initial stance of 'staying out of the leadership struggle' (Edwards, 1993g) to side with Clark. Its president, Ken Douglas, reportedly advised Moore over the telephone to resign voluntarily (Herbert, 1993d).

It was also along this line that Clark's challenge against the incumbent, who had increased the number of Labour seats by an impressive 16 and its votes by 25,878, and nearly won the election was rationalised. Not surprisingly, the Clark camp's emphasis was not on the number of the seats the party had gained, but on the percentage of the vote it had received at the election. In comparison to the 1990 election result, the party actually lost its share of the poll (from 35.1% to 34.7%). Since it was the percentage of the overall vote that would determine each political party's share of seats under MMP, this trend was alarming. Clark said on the radio: 'The plain, brutal fact is that Labour lost the election and it lost the election with a smaller proportion of the vote than the time before' (Orsman, 1993b). The cause of the problem was, in Clark's supporters' view, indistinguishable differences between Labour and National policies, that in turn gave the Alliance a serious electoral advantage. The key to solving this problem was policy differentiation from National, and the Clark supporters saw it as impossible without displacing Moore.

### **The deputy leadership candidates**

Around this time, candidates for the deputy leadership started to emerge. A former Finance Minister in the fourth Labour Government, David Caygill made himself available as a candidate for the No.2 position providing Clark won the top job. While himself refusing to comment publicly on his position, he made his support for the challenger unequivocal to fellow Clark supporters.

Another candidate for the deputy leadership was a Moore supporter, Michael Cullen<sup>124</sup>. Generally regarded as more left leaning than Caygill, he had ideological appeal to some Clark supporters. In fact, according to Dyson, this entailed 'a lot of very serious debate' within the group<sup>125</sup> (Dyson, interview, 1998). While some felt quite comfortable with Caygill as Clark's leadership partner<sup>126</sup>, the choice was not easy for others. As Dyson puts it;

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<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, trade unions still have strong ties with the Labour Party. For example, the Service Workers' Union had four former officials as MPs between 1993 and 1996. See Young (1993).

<sup>124</sup> Also Steve Maharey's name was entertained by some Clark supporters. But without his own interest, his name was not given serious considerations (Maharey, interview, 1998).

<sup>125</sup> Another Clark supporter who endorsed Cullen as a candidate for the Deputy Leadership, was David Lange. In his letter to eight MPs, he named the finance spokesperson as Clark's ideal running mate, who could bridge the two Clark camps and 'save the party from bleeding' (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 30 November 1993)

<sup>126</sup> For example, Northey describes Caygill as a 'very good thinker and a person of integrity' (Northey, interview, 1998). Maharey explains his decision to support him as: 'David was clear, you know, that

It was a very hard choice because I think all of us really like Michael... Michael's been part of our group, you know. He's always seen as being on the left of the party. He always stood up to Richard Prebble and Roger Douglas. He's really admired by the left in the caucus... But I couldn't support Michael, because he didn't support Helen. And I said that the deputy has to support the leader. That is the first criteria, so I couldn't vote for Michael. But that was really horrible, even though I like Caygill. I would have liked Michael as the deputy leader, but I voted for Caygill. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Cullen himself knew that supporting Moore was costing his chance of winning the second place.

I mean, basically, if I had promised to vote for Helen, I would have been the deputy leader. I was told that before the vote. 'Why aren't you voting for Helen? Because if you did, I would vote for you.' I was trying to explain that was a matter of both honour and judgement... (Cullen, interview, 1998)

In the end, both Clark and Moore supporters decided not to have any 'tickets' arranged, and let individuals vote whichever candidate they felt suitable, which allowed 'cross-voting' (Dyson, interview, 1998).

### **Final days and the trauma of the infighting**

In the meantime, the animosity between the two camps continued to intensify in the final days. The level of mistrust between them was so high that '[p]eople started to feel whatever was said, something else was meant'. 'People were talking, groaning, and mumbling, it built up the hurt. Then when it actually happened in the way it did, it reinforced all those beliefs that this has been a long-running awful thing' (Maharey, interview, 1998). Being forced to choose a side cost some personal friendships in the process.

...perhaps ideologically [those] I was closest to were the people I voted against. And some of the people that I was voting with were people I wasn't so very ideologically close to. I had to choose between friends. Both Mike and Helen were friends of mine. Neither has ever been a personal enemy, Helen, particularly - never been a personal enemy of mine in the caucus. We had always been quite close in terms of our attitudes, in our reactions to events as they unfolded in the 1980s and early 1990s. So, that was a terribly difficult time to have to make that choice, to go through a change which I thought was extraordinarily badly timed. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Even for a newcomer, the experience was traumatic. Referring to those days as an 'extremely difficult time', Rick Barker likens his experience to a tragic accident:

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his role was to support her. So, he was a very convincing option, and I like him enormously. He has huge ability. So, I felt entirely comfortable he was the right sort of Deputy...' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

...it's almost impossible to describe to people accurately what goes on and emotions and so on. I mean you can be told about things, but it's like being in a terrible train accident, and then describing it to your friends what the events were like. Yes, they could have some appreciation of it, but they will never ever see it, like the victim would. (Barker, interview, 1998)

The growing pressure and tension in the final days before the third caucus meeting started taking its toll, too. Some Clark supporters started to reconsider their decisions. Street remembers one telephone conference,

where [an MP] said: 'Folks, I have to say I can't go through with this. This is too hard. I can't do it.' And we said: 'Get off the line then \*\*\*\*. Get off the line. Hang up.' We waited till we heard the little beep that told us that he had finished - he'd hung up. (Street, interview, 1998)

Maharey believes that the pressure to bear was greater for those who had been Parliamentary colleagues of Moore than for the newcomers. He describes the horrendous final days in the following terms.

There were some people who had been in the party for longer than them (newcomers), who were the waverers. People who had been inside the Parliamentary wing, who were grumbling, moaning and groaning, and who backed off during that process. Because it was a hard process, you needed a fair amount of intestinal fortitude to make it through those five days. People who are outside of politics often wonder... 'What do you mean it [being a politician] is stressful?' Well, it was. A lot of people became ill during those five days, you know, literally - sick. Had to go to doctor, get stuff done to them, and so on, because the stress was huge. And those people came to caucus... I had a person in my room just prior to the caucus, sobbing - a man. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Indeed, the level of stress was such that some MPs succumbed to the pressure from the Moore camp.

The stress just got to them, an hour before the caucus, and they spent an hour before the caucus largely crying on - literally - on people's shoulders around the building including mine, and then later they changed their minds. The stress was huge. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

### **Moore's choice**

Although many predicted before the 1 December caucus meeting that the challenger had secured enough support to topple the incumbent (eg, Munro, 1993b; Herbert, 1993d), Moore's fate was far from sealed. The caucus rules allow any of its members to put down a motion in relation to the caucus rules (including the leadership selection) if a notice of that intention is given in advance of at least one week. Then whether that motion (in this case whether there should be a leadership contest) is carried or not is determined by a vote at a following caucus meeting (Hunt, 1998). If the motion is carried, then there will be another vote, this time on who should be the (new) leader.

The Senior Whip, Jonathan Hunt, who flew back from his shortened trip to Australia on hearing the coup, quickly realised that not enough caucus members were keen to carry the first motion. The majority of the caucus members were still wary of the negative impact on the party of having a leadership change so soon after an election which Labour nearly won. As Hunt puts it, 'I thought there was by no means a majority for having a ballot at that moment. It could come up six months down the track, it could come up a year down the track, could come up three months down the track, but it didn't' (Hunt, interview, 1998).

What he also realised was that in case the motion was carried, Moore would most certainly lose the leadership in the second vote. Hunt duly offered the leader his analysis. 'I advised Mike Moore beforehand that there were going to be two questions. And I told him the outcome of the second question wasn't necessarily [connected to] the outcome of the first question'. Being confident about his estimate, Hunt actually recited his advice three times to Moore including one five minutes before the third caucus meeting. Then '... I said to him: "If you have a ballot on whether or not there should be a leadership challenge in a week's time, then you will win that motion". But I said: "If that motion comes up and is decided immediately, then you have a chance of losing"' (Hunt, interview, 1998).

### **The vote**

On 1 December, the crucial caucus meeting went ahead as scheduled at 10:00 am. At the meeting, Lange, who earlier escorted Clark into the caucus room, moved a motion on the leadership. Before Hunt, the chairperson of the meeting, distributed papers with the words, 'Yes' and 'No' on them to the caucus members, something unexpected happened. Against Hunt's repeated advice, Moore seconded Lange's motion. Hunt recalls: 'I was just absolutely flabbergasted'. And because it was the leader himself who seconded the motion, 'there was no objection to holding a ballot there right at that moment' (Hunt interview, 1998). Hunt then invited anyone interested in the leadership to stand up. Moore and Clark did so. Then the caucus members were handed over papers with the two candidates' names printed on them<sup>127</sup> to cast their votes.

Why did Moore ignore Hunt's advice and risked ending his leadership, when the challenge could have been avoided? Moore provides two reasons. Firstly, he could not place faith in the judgement of Hunt, who was well known as a close personal friend of Clark<sup>128</sup>.

Jonathan... see Jonathan was Chief Whip. His job is to advise the leader. He never advised me that there was, and I asked him, whether there was a challenge on

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<sup>127</sup> This may suggest that Hunt was not totally unprepared for Moore's decision to ignore his advice.

<sup>128</sup> See, Ralston (1994), especially page 64.

until the last week, because he's a Clark supporter<sup>129</sup>. He's saying that to you to pretend that he was an impartial Senior Whip doing his job. But he was... his job as Senior Whip was to tell you what was happening in the party. And he disappeared overseas so that he couldn't be found<sup>130</sup>. He did say something like that. But he didn't say... no, he didn't. He's sat there feeling sorry for himself: 'Oh, I don't know what to do.' (Moore, interview, 1998)

Secondly, Moore contends that he wanted to put an end to the brutal, full-scale infighting within the caucus.

I moved it because I knew she had the numbers. I wanted it to be over. I think it was in the interest of the Labour Party if we settled it. We were bleeding in the public mind, you know. It looked terrible for all of us. And I wanted to do the right thing for the party, even then. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Hunt provides another possible explanation. In his view, Moore miscalculated his chance of winning the second ballot, assuming that enough of the 1993 intake would support him out of a sense of gratitude for winning them seats (Hunt, interview, 1998).

Whatever Moore's reasons were, the vote was cast. The result was decisive: Clark-26 and Moore-19. At the age of 43, Clark became the first female to lead a major political party in New Zealand political history. The deputy leader's position was fought between Caygill and Michael Cullen, as predicted. The result for this position was much closer; only two votes separated the contenders: Caygill-23 and Cullen-21<sup>131</sup>. Considering the depth of the animosity both inside and outside the caucus, the task lying ahead of the new leadership team - healing the division and uniting the party once again - seemed formidable. King's following comments on the state of the caucus after the leadership change well illustrate the seriousness of the divisions between the two camps, which Clark (and Caygill) now had to amend.

I mean, people were really bruised in that leadership change. There was... it was even difficult to talk about it. It was really like a death process, if you like. There was, you know, the anger: 'Why are they doing this?' 'Why did they do this?' and then the sort of sorrow of it. I mean, I was incredibly moved by it. I mean, I was very upset by the whole experience. You know, from being really angry about it, to being very, very depressed about what happened. And I think probably a lot of people felt like I did... (King, interview, 1998)

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<sup>129</sup> Hunt disputes the claim that he was not impartial in his job as Senior Whip. He argues that ' [t]he job of Senior Whip is tell the leader whenever anything is happening so that the leader does not in any way get surprised' and that he never failed to do so. Hunt adds that as Clark respected his position and obligation, she did not consult him on the leadership until she rang him while he was in Australia. Hunt immediately contacted Moore about what he was just informed (Hunt, interview, 1998).

<sup>130</sup> According to the former Senior Whip, he was in Sydney for three days in order to attend a long standing personal engagement. It was during this visit - not prior to it - when he first heard of Clark's challenge. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

<sup>131</sup> The discrepancy between the total votes for the leadership (45) and deputy leadership (44) was caused by the absence of Judy Keall. She was reportedly too shocked at Moore's loss to participate in the following ballot for the No.2 role. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has covered the events and background of the 1993 leadership change. With this background information, the next two chapters attempt to analyse the cause of Moore's leadership demise. Special emphasis is placed upon whether such an attempt can be successful within the proposed framework.

## CHAPTER 4

### Moore leadership: expectations and concerns

#### Introduction

Having learned the overall history of the development of the discontent with Moore's leadership, the next task is to address two key questions for this study, which are:

- a) Why and how did the Moore leadership collapse?; and
- b) Can the collapse be explained within the framework suggested in Chapter 2?

It has been proposed in Chapter 2 that in order to secure the leadership, a new leader has to: 1) retain loyalists' support; 1) consolidate uncommitted supporters' support by removing their doubts about him/her; and 3) convert the opponents' opposition to support.

Although ideally a leader will strive to achieve all these three tasks, it is highly unlikely. In reality, s/he is more likely to achieve only a few tasks, and will be forced to concentrate on some at the expense of others. The vulnerability of the leadership is dependent on factors such as: A) the composition and relative strength of support; B) each group's expectations and concerns of the leader; and C) the leader's ability to meet those expectations and deal with their concerns.

Analysis of Moore's leadership demise is conducted over two chapters. This chapter - the first part of the analysis - is divided into three sections. The first section sets the scene by identifying four factors surrounding his leadership in 1990, all crucial to the propositions of this study. They are: a) Moore's original support composition; b) his supporters' expectations; c) his opponents' concerns; and finally d) Moore's strategic decisions. The second section examines how he attempted to meet the expectations, while the last section analyses how he handled the concerns. The latter two sections also evaluate how (un)successful his attempts were in each regard, and how his performance impacted on his support base.

#### Section A

##### **a) Moore's initial support composition**

##### Moore's appointment in 1990

A crucial factor in analysing Moore's leadership durability is the fact that the real strength of his support was never fully tested until the 1993 leadership vote. When the leadership position was vacated by David Lange in August 1989, Moore and Geoffrey Palmer contested for the position. The result was a comprehensive victory for Palmer. Margaret Austin, the then Chief Whip who counted the votes, recollects the result:

... there was no question at all that Mike Moore did not have support in Caucus, and the vote reflected that. Now, I am not going to tell you what the vote was because as Whip I was the only person who actually counted the vote. But I can tell you quite bluntly that the vote for Geoffrey Palmer was overwhelming. (Austin, interview, 1997)

When Palmer resigned from the leadership in September 1990, his decision was primarily influenced by the views expressed by the Cabinet Ministers at the Cabinet meeting on 3 September 1990. The numbers of Cabinet Ministers supporting Palmer and Moore were, according to Austin (who was by then a Cabinet Minister), seven and thirteen, respectively (Austin, interview, 1997). Prior to Palmer's resignation, one political observer estimated Moore's chance of becoming the leader in the following words<sup>132</sup>: 'Moore now lacks a political base either in the caucus, where at best he could command a dozen votes, or the party at large' (James, 1990: 84). Asked whether Moore's ultimate success in 1990 reflected increased confidence in Moore's leadership ability within the PLP, Austin's reply is dismissive:

No, I don't think that's true at all. There were other factors which led to the changes. And they were that members of Cabinet started to get total jitters about the outcome of the 1990 election, and everything that went on during 1990 was coloured by the increasing realisation that the 1990 election result was going to be demolition of the Labour Government. Politicians are pretty ego-centred - Cabinet Ministers even more - and by the time you got to mid 1990, the writing was on the wall that the Government was on its way out. And that had a significant effect on people's confidence levels, and they would clutch at any straw at all which might change their fortunes. So, that puts a different complexion on it all together. (Austin, interview, 1997)

In other words, the 1990 leadership change was induced by a majority of the Cabinet Ministers' (and some backbenchers' who assisted Moore's campaign to undermine Palmer) 'panic-driven self-interest' to preserve their seats (Eunson<sup>133</sup>, 1990). Their reason for supporting Moore revolved around his great popularity with the public. No other factors came into consideration. To illustrate this point, when asked whether Moore was considered superior to Palmer as a leader in any other area at the time, Phil Goff, one of the former Moore-backing Cabinet Ministers, replies:

No. I had a lot of respect for Geoffrey Palmer as an individual and as a Parliamentarian. But we had reached the point by mid 1990, if not before, where it was clear that while Geoffrey had considerable skills in the area of practical application as a Minister, he did not have the popular appeal that was likely to prevent a landslide victory for the National Party in that year. I wasn't totally convinced at the time that whoever we had up as leader was going to prevent such an electoral outcome, but I thought there was a greater chance under the leadership of Mike Moore that we would recover more ground than what was likely to occur with Geoffrey. Mike had a popular appeal, particularly to a section of the

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<sup>132</sup> He predicted that Moore would challenge Palmer after the election. (James, 1990: 84)

<sup>133</sup> Eunson was a former Parliamentary journalist, and served Palmer as a communications consultant for seven weeks until Palmer resigned.



electorate that was maybe termed 'traditional Labour' that had become somewhat alienated from the Labour Government, and there was some possibility that he could win that support back. And I think the change in leadership was predominantly around that factor, it was comparing the political skills of the two leaders. And Mike's political skills were certainly more pronounced in his ability to communicate and to potentially win back the support that Labour had been losing. (Goff, interview, 1998)

What becomes clear from these pictures is that there was little *positive* support for Moore<sup>134</sup>, based upon his overall leadership ability. This was highlighted by the number of votes *not* cast for him in the 1990 leadership contest, that was fought between Moore and a backbencher, Richard Northey. Northey, in the event, attracted between 11 (19.30% of the whole caucus) and 19 (33.33%) votes (Northey, 1998a). In addition, there were some informal votes<sup>135</sup>.

These figures are rather astonishing. It is important to remember the circumstances under which the 1990 leadership vote took place. When the incumbent Prime Minister, Geoffrey Palmer, succumbed to the pressure to resign, he was still commanding the majority support within the caucus at large. As Northey was never considered (even by himself) a serious contender, the leadership ballot was more or less a vote of confidence in Moore. This point was also emphasised by Northey's reason for standing. He explained why he 'had to' make himself available for the race as follows:

I thought I had no chance at all of winning the leadership vote. I stood not to win but give people a positive alternative to voting for Mike Moore for those people in the caucus:

- (a) who wanted to protest at there being a leadership change at that time;
- (b) who wanted to protest at Mike Moore's undermining tactics against Geoffrey Palmer, his temperament, or deficiencies in his leadership ability.
- (c) who wanted to support someone other than Mike Moore<sup>136</sup>. (Northey, 1998a)

Since the General Election was only seven weeks away, presenting a united front behind the new leader was crucial for the party's electoral fortune, although the vote result was not to be released publicly. Even amongst those who supported Moore in the leadership change there were doubts about his overall leadership ability, apart from his undeniable electoral appeal. Some of the Moore supporting Cabinet Ministers were said to be 'half-hearted about it [leadership change], but nonetheless leaned that way because they believed he would be the "circuit breaker" Labour needed' (Eunson, 1990) for the coming election.

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<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, that a number of the Cabinet and caucus members decided to adhere to Palmer even though they were thought to benefit from the leadership change indicates the presence of *positive* support for him.

<sup>135</sup> Keith Eunson asserted that Northey received 11 votes and there were 5 informals (Eunson, 1990).

<sup>136</sup> Northey says that he would not have stood if any of the following had stood: Palmer, Caygill, Clark, Cullen, King, Goff, Marshall, Lange, Matthewson and Rodger (in rough order of his preference). He adds that in their absence, he thought that he would have made a better leader than Moore. (Northey, 1998a)

Almost exclusive concentration on Moore's vote winning power as the support criterion suggests a vulnerability in his leadership. Support based upon a leader's one particular skill to tackle a specific task (i.e., winning an election or minimising the magnitude of the loss) alone did not show the supporters' substantive confidence in the leader. Moreover, whether such support could be sustained beyond that task is highly questionable.

Moore's leadership extended across three different periods of caucus, namely: 1987-1990 (during which he was elected as the leader); 1990-1993 (during which he served as the leader); and 1993-1996 (which saw him dismissed as the leader). The longest period of his leadership was spent with the middle group, and it is this 1990-1993 caucus where the core of the anti-Moore force, which played a prominent role as the catalyst for Moore's 1993 demise, was formed. After the 1993 election, the second caucus group returned almost intact – with the exceptions of Bruce Gregory, Richard Prebble, Chris Laidlaw, and Sonja Davies<sup>137</sup>. To comprehend Moore's leadership demise, it is crucial to examine his support composition in the second caucus (1990-1993) shortly after the 1990 election.

The distribution of the 29 MPs including seven new members appeared to be as follows<sup>138</sup>:

Loyalists:	Braybrooke, Elder, Moore, Robertson
Uncommitted supporters:	Austin, Blincoe, Clark, Cullen, Dalziel, Dunne, Gregory, Hawkins, Hodgson, Hunt, Maharey, Matthewson, Prebble, Sutherland, Swain, Tapsell, Tennet, Tirikatene-Sullivan, Tizard, Wetere, Wilde
Opponents	Caygill, Kelly, Lange, Davies

The 1990 election loss did not immediately have any significant effect on Moore's overall support composition. If anything, it may have worked in his favour. Although a few loyal Moore supporters or enthusiastic Moore promoters in the 1990 leadership change such as Bill Jeffries (former Minister of Justice) and Peter Neilson (former Minister of Revenue) were defeated, more Moore opponents like Northey, Palmer, Philip Woollaston (former Minister of Conservation), Jenny Kirk, Russell Marshall (former Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Peter Simpson either retired or lost their seats. The new 1990 intake, which played a pivotal role in ousting Moore three years later,

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<sup>137</sup> Bruce Gregory, Richard Prebble, and Chris Laidlaw lost their seats to Tau Henare (NZF), Sandra Lee (Alliance), and Pauline Gardiner (National), respectively. Davies retired and was succeeded by Trevor Mallard.

<sup>138</sup> It is important to emphasise again that support compositions which appear in this study need to be treated with caution as they may not be entirely accurate.

possessed little knowledge about him at this stage, and were willing to support his leadership in the meantime.

### **Expectations and concerns**

This study has suggested that successful leaders must effectively respond both to the expectations of caucus members (by satisfying them) and their concerns (by mitigating them). Failure at either task inevitably contributes to leadership vulnerability.

As will be discussed shortly, the third caucus group, (1993-1996), especially the 1993 new intake, was important in the sense that it tipped the balance in Clark's favour. Yet, as the leadership change took place within two months of the 1993 General Election defeat, Moore was not given much time to respond to this group's expectations and - more crucially - concerns. During this short period, only two caucus meetings were held. One could not possibly conclude that Moore had failed to meet their expectations or form strong enough concerns to believe that he should be replaced from such brief formal encounters. Thus the real questions are: whether the concerns of the 1993 intake were the same as those held by the 1990-1993 group; and how did the 1993 intake form those concerns? Before these questions are addressed in the next chapter, this section examines the expectations and concerns held by the first two caucus groups and how Moore responded to them.

#### **b. Supporters' expectations**

##### Elective: Winning the 1990 election/minimising the magnitude of the election defeat

As already noted, upon his selection, the primary expectations of Moore were elective: if not to win the 1990 election, at least to minimise the impact of defeat by saving still salvageable seats. In deciding to support him, the Moore proponents did not give any consideration to his suitability (or lack thereof) for the party's obvious task after Labour's likely election loss: re-building the party. Goff remembers his position in 1990 and says:

I had known Mike for a long time, I'd known Mike Moore since 1969. And I thought that he had considerable skills generally, but the predominant factor that we were looking at was in terms of the election campaign in that year rather than beyond 1990... I don't think huge consideration was given to the re-building phase at that point... It was the immediate rather than longer term that we're looking at. (Goff, interview, 1998)

##### Expectations within the new caucus

Once the election was over, a new set of expectations was formed. Those expectations were three-fold, in line with Jackson's (and to a lesser extent, Stark's) leadership (de)selection criteria (Chapter 2), ie., a) unity, b) policy, and c) elective. They were:

- A. Unity expectation: restore trust of the Extra-Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP)
- B. Policy expectation: re-establish Labour's identity as a centre-left party
- C. Elective expectation: lead the party to victory at the 1993 election

As the leader of a major opposition party, Moore's ultimate responsibility (and the caucus' natural expectation of him) was to ensure a victory for the party at the next election in three years. Nevertheless, having being so convincingly rejected by the voters at the 1990 election, the possibility of achieving that goal seemed rather remote.

Given this grim prospect, first and foremost, Moore was expected to lead a process of re-construction of the party's credibility so that it could hopefully be considered as an alternative government again in the future. This task primarily involved restoration of party unity and re-establishment (or re-claiming) of the party's identity.

Over the previous six years, the working relationship between the PLP and the EPLP had seriously eroded<sup>139</sup>. As the supplier of candidates and other necessary support - both financial and personnel - at an election time, regaining the EPLP's trust and co-operation was crucial for the PLP's future. In order to accomplish this, the PLP had to demonstrate that it had learnt a lesson from past mistakes. The ambitious and radical economic reform programs implemented under the fourth Labour Government (Boston and Holland, 1987; Holland and Boston, 1990) isolated many Labour supporters both for their contents and the lack of consultation in their making (Dyson, 1991). Indeed, Labour's massive election defeat was widely interpreted as the voters' rejection of those right-wing economic policies (Vowles and Aimer, 1993: 76). Therefore, if the PLP hoped to convince its lost supporters and dismayed remaining party members that it deserved another chance at governance, separation from its past, and presentation of a fresh set of policies, was considered essential. Those new policies needed not only to reflect the views of the EPLP, but also to ensure the EPLP was involved in their making<sup>140</sup>.

The caucus members almost universally supported such a strategy which was understood to entail policy review. The real question was to what extent the 'new' Labour policies should move away from those of the 1984-1990 period. The rift Moore needed to amend existed not only between the PLP and EPLP, but also within the PLP. Some former Cabinet Ministers such as Margaret Austin, Richard Prebble, David

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<sup>139</sup> A former President (1884-1987), Margaret Wilson's account (1989) provides an insider's view on the strained relationship between the two bodies.

<sup>140</sup> Frustrated with the lack of consultation by the PLP in the policy making process, the EPLP had set up ten Policy Committees after the 1988 Party Conference. The aim of this exercise was to ensure: 1) the Government policies to remain in line with to the Party Manifesto; and 2) sufficient consultation take place if the Government policies needed to depart from the Manifesto. The effectiveness of this invention turned out to be, however, limited. See, Debnam (1992).

Caygill, Clive Matthewson, and Peter Dunne had reservations about the total disowning of the policies of the previous six years<sup>141</sup>.

At the same time, a number of the surviving caucus members were less enthusiastic about the merits of the reforms. In addition, the majority of the new 1990 intake were clearly identified as left and were critical of the fourth Labour Government's achievements. Not surprisingly, these groups were eager to see the party distance itself from this period and re-establish itself as a centre-left party. For example, Judith Tizard lists 'to some extent reclaiming what I understood the Labour Party to be' as her reason for standing for Parliament (Tizard, interview, 1998). Her fellow new MP, Steve Maharey, also says that he entered national politics as a reaction to what the Government did.

When I watched Roger Douglas I thought he wrecked this party and Trevor [de Clean<sup>142</sup>] helped him and I came into politics, really, for that idealistic notion that I want to be part of a new kind of social democracy (Maharey, interview, 1998).

Another 1990 intake, Lianne Dalziel echoed Maharey's view in her interview in 1991: 'Labour would have to change, that it would change and it would be good to be part of that' (Hubbard, 1991: 26).

To formulate policies that would satisfy all the MPs without alienating anyone was by no means a small task. Indeed, a political reporter described Moore's task as 'daunting', adding that his leadership would ultimately depend on his success or failure in accomplishing it:

Mr Moore did not have long enough in his two months last year to show whether as Prime Minister he could lead Labour and run the country. But he did show he was unable to turn around Labour's unpopularity and so win the election. He now has to show he has the capacity to lead Labour in Opposition. If he does then he will lead Labour into the 1993 election; if he does not then leadership challenges against him will emerge. (Riddell, 1991)

### **c. Concerns**

Even prior to the 1990 leadership change, there were strong concerns about Moore's leadership ability within the caucus. Together with his strengths, his weaknesses were commonly known to the Labour MPs. Those concerns were most explicitly expressed by Northey's candidacy for the 1990 leadership contest. He explains why he judged Moore as being unsuitable as the leader of the Labour Party at the time.

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<sup>141</sup> A number of proponents of Rogernomics had either retired (eg., Roger Douglas, Trevor de Cleene, and Michael Bassett) or were defeated (eg., Phil Goff, Peter Neilson, David Butcher, Bill Sutton, Ralph Maxwell, and Ken Shirley) at the 1990 election.

<sup>142</sup> Trevor de Cleen was former Minister of Revenue and MP for Palmerston North. Maharey succeeded his seat on his retirement.

I did not then, nor subsequently in 1993 or 1996 believe that Mike Moore had the temperament in particular, and skills and beliefs to some extent, to be the Leader of the Labour Party or Prime Minister.

His behaviour in public and even more so in private was sometimes erratic, irrational, sometimes lacking in any apparent basis in principle, concerned with television image of an action or policy rather than any real principle benefits it would have for people. Although unquestionably personally popular with the public, he was at severe risk of taking actions, making colourful comments, or making decisions on policy, or personalities that would be harmful for the country; for the Party; for the pursuit of good Labour policies or principles; or even for Labour's electoral support in the long term. (Northey, 1998a)

Like the expectations, the concerns about the Moore leadership, shared by a number of caucus members, fell into (two of) the general leadership (de)selection criteria suggested by Jackson. They were:

Unity concern: his tendency to dominate - an obstacle to run a unified caucus

Policy concern: his erratic behaviour – hindrance to formulating and presenting agreed policy

In relation to the first concern, his open and long held ambition for the leadership<sup>143</sup> and his involvement in attempts to undermine two respected incumbent leaders (Rowling and Palmer) also gave him a reputation as a 'Machiavellian'<sup>144</sup> (Beach, 1990). Such a perception did not help a new party leader who needed to command trust among his followers and run a unified caucus. After all, if one is not prepared to provide others with loyalty, how can s/he ask for it from others? Can s/he persuade her/his followers to unite under his/her leadership?

Moore was well aware of how he was perceived by his colleagues in this regard (Moore, 1993b: 26). The self-professed self-promoter (Hubbard, 1989) emphasised the value of loyalty (Campbell, 1988: 19) and honesty (Hubbard, 1989); he insisted that his conduct stayed within the rules: 'There are things you won't do' (Beach, 1990). According to Moore, his involvement in ousting a former Labour Leader, Bill Rowling was the right thing to do for the party despite his personal reluctance. 'The hardest thing to do in politics is shooting the wounded. Nobody particularly likes putting the family pet down' (Hubbard, 1989). Regarding Palmer's demise, he maintained that he played no part in it. Furthermore, he stated that he had said 'go away' to his colleagues who encouraged him to challenge Palmer (McMillan, 1993: 35). When he eventually

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<sup>143</sup> For example, in 1985, asked whether he saw himself as a future leader of the Labour Party, he replied: 'Sometimes. Sometimes I'm glad I'm not' (O'Sullivan, 1985: 58). In 1989, he contended that he was capable of doing the job as Prime Minister while adding that Lange - the then leader - was the best person for the job 'at the moment' (Hubbard, 1989). See also Moore (1993b).

<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, Moore himself once used a quote from Machiavelli in his denial of the rumour regarding his unsuccessful challenge against Lange. See Campbell (1988: 19).

agreed to make himself available for a leadership challenge, he claims, once again the decision was made in the party's interest.

It would've been smarter and better for me had I not taken the leadership. I know that. That's why, you know, I really didn't want to do it; I did this really as an act of sacrifice for the party...

[If he had not taken over the leadership] twelve MPs - that's all we would have ended up with. At that point, we would have been under threat of being eclipsed by the Alliance and NewLabour. And there would not have been a party. We would have been out for twenty years. My judgement was if I could do well to keep us around thirty seats - not twelve, fifteen seats - we would have been in this position to come back within three, six years. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Goff confirms that Moore was not 'the mover and shaker in the leadership change', although he questions the extent of the former leader's alleged reluctance to accept the top position.

He had clearly indicated to colleagues that if he was called upon to do it, he was willing to do it. I'm not sure that I'd go much beyond that. Mike, like most people in politics, was ambitious, but if he had been looking narrowly at his ambition, he might have decided that it was better to be there to pick up the pieces afterwards than to assume the leadership beforehand. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Moore's 'reluctant' involvement in the 1990 leadership change has been more vigorously disputed by his former deputy, Helen Clark, an instrumental figure in the 1990 leadership change. 'The blushing bride? Come on!' (Rentoul, 1993b<sup>145</sup>).

Bill Ralston, a former journalist with TV3, also contends that Moore's "spin doctor", adviser, and confidante', Graeme Coleman initiated and carried out a destabilisation campaign of Palmer's leadership by 'passing on as much gossip, innuendo and adverse information to selected members of the media as he could' which included 'the results of a leadership poll allegedly taken by Labour's pollsters which purported to show Labour stood a better chance of winning with Moore at the helm than Palmer'<sup>146</sup> (Ralston, 1997). Although it was possible that Moore's staff was working on his behalf without his knowledge or approval, it seemed unlikely.

Even some of Moore's strong backers were concerned with Moore's leadership ability. For example, Clark, was also reported as having expressed her concerns over Moore's 'superficiality and the Churchill-type stance he was taking in his attempt to become the leader of the Labour Party' before Palmer's resignation (*The Press*, 11

<sup>145</sup> See also, Ralston (1994: 62) and Lange (1993d).

<sup>146</sup> Regarding the role he unintentionally played in the leadership change, Ralston comments: 'I suspect I helped Coleman and Moore's cause by running a story... sourced from Coleman, of the impending coup, Palmer's imminent demise and Moore's equally imminent success. Although only I and Riddell in the Press were the sole two journalists running the speculation (the other media universally ignored it or ran denials from the Palmer camp) the story on TV3 probably caused more pressure on the Prime Minister's position and may have persuaded one or two laggardly supporters to finally jump on the Moore bandwagon. (Ralston, 1997)

September 1990, p.6). Although this report was denied by Clark herself on the following day<sup>147</sup>, there was evidence to suggest that she had doubts over the new leader.

With regard to the second concern, in general, he was viewed as lacking discipline in terms of organisational thinking and behaviour. He was noted for leaping from one idea to another without paying much attention to the consistency between them<sup>148</sup> (Hubbard, 1989). His erratic tendency and ill-judgement came under question as well. In July 1990, two months before he became Prime Minister, one journalist wrote:

... Moore has raised eyebrows by his frenetic pace, confusing activity, promising action which there is no back-up to provide. Occasional lapses of judgement such as inappropriate jokes have at times bewildered foreign hosts. (Beach, 1990)

He was generally regarded as a successful and effective Minister of Overseas Trade, the position in which he excelled with many innovative initiatives and ideas<sup>149</sup>. However, at the same time, he was seen by the caucus members to have a difficulty in controlling these dispositions and impulses. The deficient control was believed to lead him to inconsistency and occasional misjudgment. For example, asked to name the strengths and weaknesses of Moore as a leader, Lange says:

His strengths are his vigour, his commitment and his energy; and his weaknesses are his lack of judgement and his lack of perception and failure to get relativities into perspective. He's a person I'd almost describe as like a pinball machine wired by a colour blind electrician, so that you cannot know where you stand in any order of things. That is not to be vicious to him. I don't feel vicious towards him. I just feel that he is a person who is very, very dynamic in politics but [who] lacks some sort of integration if I can put it that way. (Lange, interview, 1996)

Even one of his loyal supporters admits to his problem in this regard.

Michael has ten ideas a day. Eight are hopeless. One is reasonable. But one a day is absolutely brilliant. Now the trick is picking that one brilliant creative idea that he comes up with. (Braybrooke, interview, 1998)

Phil Goff, another Moore supporter, agrees:

Mike's strengths lie in his experience in politics over a long period of time. His ability to think laterally and his ability to appeal to a section of the electorate that a

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<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, Clark did not directly deny her reported comments. She claimed that the meeting with Jim Anderton, who reported the comments on a TV interview show, was of so little significance that she could 'scarcely recollect' the topics of the conversation. She added: 'To suggest I spent half an hour running down a senior colleague is utter fantasy'. (*The Press*, 12 September 1990, p.2)

<sup>148</sup> When this was pointed out to him as a problem in 1985, Moore attributed it to his having been in Opposition. 'Yeah, I've got ideas. That's one of the problems of Opposition, however, you get bored with ideas 'cos you can't do anything about them. So you spit them out by the minute. It's also a fact that in opposition you're judged by the headlines and the space you can get in the media' (O'Sullivan, 1985: 57).

<sup>149</sup> For example, his former colleague, Roger Douglas, wrote on Moore during his Minister days: 'He has more ideas a minute than anyone else I've ever known; more than he can get down on paper and into a framework so people can get to work on them' (Douglas, 1987: 134).



more academic looking Labour Party might have had less attraction to. I suppose his weakness in that sense was that he was regarded as a less consistent leader than Helen Clark. His track was less predictable. Mike is one of the few people I know that reads really widely and can come up with ideas that have a flash of brilliance about them. He can think and come up with new ideas in a way that is uncommon in politics. The difficulty is that some of those ideas at least have to be tested against their practicability and those that cast their vote against Mike would have seen that as a weakness in his leadership style. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Naturally, there were concerns whether his characteristics were appropriate for the leadership role. One former Cabinet Minister who backed Moore in the 1990 leadership change, refers to him as 'a sort of erratic genius'. S/he also acknowledges her/his awareness of the new leader's shortcomings upon his election, although s/he was prepared to overlook them for the new leader's popular appeal.

When I was part of the Cabinet when we made Mike Moore Leader in 1990, not long before the 1990 election, and I knew at that time that life would never be dull with him as the leader . . . you . . . knew... with Mike Moore as the leader you always woke up feeling worried because you didn't know what he might have told the media over night. So you'd tend to wake up and turn the radio on at six o' clock in the morning to find out what Mike Moore had announced over night, and you just hoped that it was something that we knew about... He is an intuitive politician, and he sometimes acts and speaks out before he's reflected fully, and certainly before he's consulted fully. That's part of his nature... some people had a lot of difficulty with that. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Those concerns were not confined to experienced MPs who had worked with Moore. They were shared by some newcomers who had had, at best, limited contact with him. For instance, one 1990 intake says that those with history as party activists were aware of the leader's strengths as well as weaknesses on entering Parliament (Tizard, interview, 1998). Another new MP with limited prior party experiences had a memorable yet unpleasant early encounter with Moore which increased her 'policy' concerns about his leadership. When s/he attended a leaders' debate during the 1990 election campaign as a candidate, s/he heard the Labour leader promising that his government would take a tough stance on beneficiaries.

Then I thought, 'Hello? This was not in the policy that I got', you know... I didn't recall anyone discussing that kind of attack on people on benefits. And I spoke to him sometime afterwards, and said: 'Why did you do that?' And he said because they had polled public opinion and that it was popular to say that, and that made me very angry. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

For someone who expected a Labour leader to have 'heart to feel the issues and the mind to deliver on them', Moore's populist attitude did not come across well. Not surprisingly, as a result, 'I had my doubts right from the outset' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). Nevertheless, despite such suspicion, those MPs were prepared to reserve their judgement and give Moore a fair chance to prove himself. In other words, at this stage, they were content to be uncommitted supporters. As Tizard attests:

... I had watched leaders develop and... most leaders expand into the role. I mean the role is undefined, and you just watch these people who you'd have doubts about over of all sorts of things you'd have heard of. And all of sudden you think, 'Oh, good God, I didn't know he or she could do that'. And it is one of the most extraordinary opportunities and I hoped that Mike would expand into the job. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

#### **d. Moore's strategic decision**

On becoming the leader, Moore knew that his support base was not solid, a large portion of it consisted of uncommitted supporters with varying degrees of suspicions over his suitability as the leader. The number of the loyalists was too small to fall back on, and those loyalists were not in influential positions within the caucus.

Given this vulnerable support composition, Moore had little choice. His prime objective was to convince the uncommitted supporters and convert the opponents by successfully demonstrating that he was the right person to lead the party in those new circumstances. What made his decision less complicated was the unanimous consensus inside and outside the caucus over the expectations - the necessity to restore party unity and win the 1993 election. Although the extent to which the PLP should divorce itself from the past policy record could be potentially contentious, everybody agreed that such re-positioning of the party was necessary. The nature of the concerns too was uniform, and there was no potential conflict between meeting the expectations and alleviating the concerns. What he had to do was succeed in both tasks.

#### **Section B: Meeting the expectations**

When he returned to Parliament as the Leader of the Opposition after the 1990 election, he was aware of what his caucus colleagues were expecting of him and was eager to tackle them. At the 1991 Annual Conference, he said that he had set himself two goals at the end of the previous year. Those two goals paralleled the caucus expectations. The first goal was 'to start the rebuilding of the Parliamentary Labour Party's links with the Party and people of New Zealand'. The second goal was 'by the end of the year to have the public believe we could win the 1993 election' (NZLP, 1991a: 29).

Before the process of party re-building commenced, first of all, the 'mistakes' of the past needed to be properly acknowledged. At the 1990 Annual Party Conference held between 9-11 November, a mere two weeks after the election, Moore accepted 'the responsibility for the past' despite having being the leader for just nine weeks. Although he described 'most of' the fourth Labour Government's achievement as 'good', he admitted there were lessons to be learnt as well. Moore argued that the party should have differences, not divisions within. The PLP and EPLP must work together. 'There must be only one Labour Party. Surely that's the lesson we've learnt. We cannot go into elections arm-wrestling with each other' (NZLP, 1990: 24). Implicitly

acknowledging that the divisions between PLP and EPLP was caused by the latter's isolation from the policy making process by the former, the leader repeatedly promised that the party would 'listen'<sup>150</sup> (NZLP, 1990: 24).

Moore tackled his promise seriously. He attempted to set up a joint committee structure between the EPLP and PLP to discuss policy matters. He actively attended conferences, only missing two regional ones during his more than three year leadership tenure (Moore, interview, 1998). Among his efforts, most importantly the 'Labour Listens' campaign was launched in January 1991, modelled on similar campaigns in Britain and Australia. A special committee (called the Bowen Committee) was set up to carry out this campaign, and its membership included representatives from the caucus, New Zealand Council, Policy Council, Research Unit, the Affiliates, and the Leader's Office. From the caucus, two new MPs, Steve Maharey and Paul Swain volunteered to run the campaign (James, 1993d: 76). The campaign was designed to consist of three phases. The first phase, 'Aims and Values', involved extensive consultation at Regional Conferences and Electorate Committee meetings. Individual party members were also invited to make written comments on issues (NZLP, 1991b: 5). The purpose of this 'democratisation' of the policy making process was to set a framework within which everyone 'can all meet and work together' (NZLP, 1991b: 7). This common platform was seen as a vital first step to resolve 'the legacy of political differences in the Party over the last six years' (NZLP, 1991a: 31) before more detailed interim policies were developed in the second phase of the campaign (entitled 'Moving Ahead') in the 1991-1992 period. The campaign was to be concluded in the final phase, 'Towards 2000', that would produce the 1993 election manifesto (NZLP, 1991a: 6). The end product was expected to clearly mark a new policy direction, distinctive from the 1984-1990 period. After all, at the 1991 Party Conference, Moore declared:

Monetarism is over. Rogernomics has had its day and though its day was important and historically necessary, it's now a new day, a new dawn and New Zealand must move on. (NZLP, 1991a: 27)

Despite the efforts described above, however, the divisions between the EPLP-PLP were not fully amended, nor was Labour able to re-claim its status as a centre-left party. In the case of the former expectation, open antagonism and disagreement between the EPLP and PLP as a whole disappeared. Nevertheless, they were replaced by the hostile relationship between the EPLP (especially party officials) and Moore himself (and the Office of the Leader of the Opposition) which was supposed to lead the healing process.

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<sup>150</sup> In his speech, Moore did not identify 'to whom' he thought the party should listen.

### A. Unity expectation: restoring the EPLP's trust

Between 1990 and 1991, it appears that a relatively civilised relationship existed between the leader and the party officials. Moore started his speech at the 1991 Annual Conference with the following words:

I want firstly to thank Ruth [Dyson - the then President], Tony Timms [the then General Secretary] and our Head Office staff for their work and commitment in keeping hope alive and our Party sustained over the past most difficult year... (NZLP, 1991a: 24)

Dyson, in return, urged her fellow Labour members to assist the leader and his team: 'We should support Mike Moore and the Labour Caucus for their loyalty to our rebuilding process' (NZLP, 1991a: 33). The amicable relationship was captured by the party's annual report on 'Parliamentary - Party Relationships' which stated: 'There has been an excellent relationship between Head Office and the Leader's Office' (NZLP, 1991a: 7).

A year later, however, the situation was different. There was not a single mention of, let alone words of gratitude to, the Head Office in Moore's speech at the 1992 Annual Conference. Similarly, Dyson completely ignored the PLP leader in her speech. The report on 'Parliamentary - Party Relationships' this year just dryly narrated the interaction between the two bodies<sup>151</sup>.

Indeed, the relationship between Moore (plus his office) and the party hierarchy (especially Ruth Dyson and Tony Timms) deteriorated during this period. Dyson, who did not support Moore's leadership bid in 1990, describes her working relationship during her Presidency as 'reasonable', neither 'ever brilliant' nor 'terribly bad'. Yet, she admits that they 'didn't work closely together' (Dyson, interview, 1998). Her view is strongly refuted by Moore, who still shows clear resentment towards the former President. With regard to the cold reception at the 1992 party conference, the former leader indicates that it was a usual occurrence.

In three years, of annual conference and regional conferences, Ruth Dyson as the Party President not once introduced me and say anything good or supportive. She'd say: 'This is the Labour Party Leader' and sit down, and I was standing like a complete dick. (laugh). Terrible! !<sup>152</sup> (Moore, interview, 1998)

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<sup>151</sup> The phrase: 'There has been an excellent relationship between Head Office and the Leaders Office' returned in the Party's 1994 Annual Conference report, the first report under Clark's leadership (NZLP, 1994: 11). The report of the 1993 Annual Congress did not contain a report on the relationship between the head office and PLP. Dyson says: 'It wasn't any deliberate decision not to acknowledge him' at the 1992 conference (Dyson, interview, 1998).

<sup>152</sup> Moore adds that he 'had to get Helen [Clark] to say something supportive to warm up the audience and she did because she is a professional' (Moore, 2000).

The Tamaki by-election campaign in February 1992, was another occasion on which Moore recognised the seriousness of the dysfunctional relationship between him and the party officials.

The Tamaki by-election was a bloody joke. Yvonne [his wife] and I personally out of our own pockets paid for signs, we got speaking systems up with 20... 10 people up from Christchurch to run it, we rented a house. We got cars, cell-phones, fax machines. We put... Yvonne and I personally out of own pocket paid for that. Because people wouldn't work. Some said they would rather the Alliance won the seat...

They said: 'You don't put a sign up'. Christ, I'm putting the bloody signs in the by-election. And we did the street corner meetings. And I got so angry... I did a street corner meeting outside the Labour Party Headquarters in Tamaki. And the President and Secretary of the party wouldn't even walk out of the room and stand on the side of the road. And... Helen Clark will verify this - that we and Yvonne and I were up there [in] Tamaki, they were all sitting there, I said 'You watch this.' and we walked in the room... they were all sitting there, doing nothing. [When I said to them]: 'See you later. I'm going back to Christchurch. See you in the morning. Bye-bye', they wouldn't even look up to say 'good-bye'. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Moore stresses that during his leadership, he was consciously trying to 'modernise' the Labour Party. 'I tried very hard. I'll take a lot of criticism but I did everything I could to try to re-organise the party, to modernise it' (Moore, interview, 1998). Included in his efforts to broaden the party's appeal were: opening up internal committee systems; organising international seminars in an attempt to re-build the party intellectually; arranging tickets for the Party Executives for balanced and broad representation; initiating constitutional changes; and personally recruiting 'outstanding sports people, top unionists, top New Zealand citizens' with sympathetic views of Labour as potential candidates for the 1993 General Election. Moore argues he had to embark on so many projects because: 'the truth of the matter is there wasn't a Labour Party. There were hardly any members. They had about three organisers - all of whom were factional' (Moore, interview, 1998).

Despite his obvious vigour, Moore's achievement was mixed. Although he accomplished some success, almost all his initiatives were met with stern objections from the party hierarchy; Moore's series of party 'modernisation' attempts were interpreted by this group as an effort to by-pass the party structure and formal procedure in order to gain personal control over the party. And they were accordingly treated as such. For example, on 2-3 April 1993 Moore organised the Waipuna Seminar to which he invited renowned 'opinion leaders' from overseas as well as New Zealand<sup>153</sup>. This initiative, designed to counter 'a poverty of intellectual ideas' that New

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<sup>153</sup> See Moore (1993d). Apart from this edited (by Moore himself) collection of transcripts, a video of the seminar was also released for sale.

Zealand was facing and to challenge the extremist monetarists at the 'highest level' (Moore, 1993d), failed to generate the party hierarchy's enthusiasm or support.

Most executive members boycotted the seminar, wouldn't even come, just to make it fail. We had organisers in Auckland [who] wouldn't even put out any leaflets for meetings, or chairs for me. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Regarding the elections of the Party Executives, Moore claims that 'the left-wing activists' reneged on their prior agreement on ticket arrangement and signed up 'a whole lot of new members of trade unions that didn't exist' to select their own candidates with newly boosted voting power at conferences. As a result, former MP candidates such as Annette King and Anne Collins were either defeated or blocked. 'My problem was with the left-wing activists, and they would do everything they could to unnerve me. I don't want to sound bitter, but that's what happened' (Moore, interview, 1998).

Moore's parliamentary candidate recruitment drive was equally contentious. Moore's personal invitation to individuals whom Moore saw appropriate to join the party in the hope that they might want to stand for Parliament in two years time (Moore, interview, 1998), was seen as a direct threat to the party's long held prerogative of candidate selection<sup>154</sup>. Considering the fact that it is caucus members who determine a leader's fate, whatever Moore's real intention was, his attempt to hand-pick candidates through personal contacts was suspected by the party officials as his undertaking to consolidate his future leadership. After the recent experience with the fourth Labour Government, which implemented controversial policies, disregarding the EPLP's wishes, the party hierarchy had no wish to repeat the same mistake.

At the 1993 Party Conference, Dyson, who was to seek a nomination in the Lyttleton electorate for the coming election, stepped down from the presidency. She was replaced by Maryan Street who convincingly beat Moore's Research Adviser, Lloyd Falck in a vote. A self-described 'feminist socialist of the reforming mould, not of the radical mould' (Bradley, 1993) intended to improve the strained relationship between Moore and the Head Office. Street says:

I did work hard at that relationship. Because it had become completely and utterly dysfunctional. Ruth and Mike could hardly bear to be in the same room with each other. They had very little respect for each other. And it was dysfunctional, it was paralysing the party operations. I determined that I would improve that relationship because it was really important that the party organisation and PLP get on. Mike was very suspicious of me to start with because I was a very close friend of Ruth. But it didn't take him long to see that I was genuine in my efforts to repair that relationship and restore a little bit of stability to the internal workings of the party. (Street, interview, 1998)

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<sup>154</sup> It is important to note that the party hierarchy has not always had their favoured candidates selected. The Party Rule guarantees three members representative of the ruling body of the party, the New Zealand Council. But whether they have the majority voice in a whole selection panel is determined by the size of electorate branch membership concerned. (For detail, see Sheppard, 1998).

Street maintains that she repaired the working relationship 'substantially' in her first six months as the President and that they 'got on very well' (Street, interview, 1998).

Moore agrees with Street - almost. 'Well, it [the relationship between the two figures] started off quite good [sic], because anything was better than Ruth Dyson' (Moore, interview, 1998).

Nevertheless, the improved relationship faced problems when he tried to proceed with his modernisation programme.

I tried to get change out and she resisted change. I wanted to re-structure the party organisation, change the way that unions were involved, change the basis of voting inside the conference - and once you started attacking what was her power base, where she got her votes and her team from, change the system of what we selected our candidates from, so that next time we would have top candidates - that's when it fell to pieces. And as soon as I pushed the envelope for a fundamental change to modernise the Labour Party as they did in Britain, it was a shit sandwich. And... they felt threatened. (Moore, interview, 1998)

From Street's viewpoint, the relationship did not suffer until after the election when she came out openly supporting Clark (Street, interview, 1998). In fact, when Moore controversially wanted to establish a centralised computer system for the election campaign, it was she who went around and persuaded reluctant and suspicious party members to co-operate.

There were some real tensions between the Leader's Office and the party because Mike was very keen on setting up a computer system to monitor... our canvassing, and to generate our targets for election day... a computer system that required a degree of nationwide discipline on the part of the party... and theoretically, it was a very good one. What it needed was to be modified to meet some of the realities of organising in particular electorates. So the local people, and the party people - are the people that I talked to mostly - and I knew them a lot better than Mike did... they had trouble with this dictatorial attitude from Wellington: 'You will give us this information by Saturday morning. And you will do this'... So, it was the way it was administered that was very alienating for lots of people. In fact, I had to go around the party and persuade people to opt in... For thirty marginal seats we wanted these computers set up.

And I had to go around the country and 'bang heads' and say: 'Please. Come on. Please opt into this. You're making things so difficult at the centre for me by not opting into this computer thing'. So several of the electorates opted into Mike's computer system simply because I had asked them. (Street, interview, 1998)

#### Mike Moore Supporters Club

Nevertheless, Moore's distrust in the party hierarchy at large remained, and it was most clearly exhibited during the election campaign, especially in his decision to set up the Mike Moore Supporters Club (MMSCL) as an independent vehicle outside the EPLP. He needed to assemble a team around him upon whom he could rely. His feeling

towards the party officials in this regard was expressed in a TV interview in the following terms:

Oh, there was no doubt that the President of the time was unsupportive, and not really in touch with reality. I can never forget the fund raising proposals put up by Maryan Street in which we were going to raise \$100,000 out of Glenda Jackson [who was a guest speaker at the 1993 Congress], \$50,000 out of [entertainers] Topp Twins' concerts... and \$50,000 from gay business people. I knew that was never going to be a starter. You can hardly run a campaign based on that awesome financial analysis of fund raising. (*Assignment*, 20 June 1996, TV1, 7:30pm)

The MMSC was officially established as a limited liability company in November 1992 with Clayton Cosgrove, Moore's senior adviser and confidante, as its managing director (Harris, 1993b). The main purpose of the MMSC was:

- 1) To boost the Labour Party support in the electorate and raise the campaign funds. It targeted the people who: a) did not want to join a political party; and b) did not like the Labour Party but liked Moore as a leader and politician (Cosgrove, interview, 1996). Moore says that 'there were business people who would not give money to the Labour Party but would give it to me'. 'Now, I was raising 90% of the money. That was coming to me.' He adds that he was an acceptable face to business, unlike some party officials who would have lost votes in that community, because they say 'things that were stupid' (Moore, interview, 1998).

The other purposes of this separate organisation, explained by Moore are:

- 2) To achieve the transparency of the campaign funds. Moore argues: 'In previous campaigns, there were secret leaders' accounts that didn't go through the party. I thought that was wrong'. 'I wasn't going to do what other leaders had done, 'cos I am very honest and very clean. I don't want the kind of scandals that had happened in the past. Every dollar went through there [to the party].' As a result, '[e]very penny was accountable' and 'transparent' (Moore, interview, 1998).
- 3) To gain tax advantages. 'There were... tax reasons for [which] we did it.' 'In terms of running books, or printing and publishing, we would get back our tax and do things at losses'. Also, 'when you make bookings you get the place and fees for advertising, you get the discount back and all that' (Moore, interview, 1998).
- 4) To run a 'competent' campaign. After experiencing campaign funds shortage problems during the 1990 election campaign<sup>155</sup>, he was determined to be 'in charge' and have 'people who could do things' second time around. In his view, 'the Head Office were incompetent'. (Moore, interview, 1998).

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<sup>155</sup> He recalls: 'I remember doing the last TV, face-to-face... interview. And we could only afford the camera for 15 minutes, and I had to go straight to the camera for 10 minutes, and they had to take the camera away because we never had the money to finish it.' (Moore, interview, 1998)



In the election campaign, the MMSC played a vital role. It published books written by Moore including his re-edited autobiography as well as the party's official manifesto. It also received donations, particularly from businesses (Mackey, 1993b) and later channelled funds to the party. A former executive of the MMSC says that the club provided the necessary funds for the election campaign which the party had no ability to raise itself (Cosgrove, interview, 1996). As claimed by Moore above, the MMSC is reported to have made a large donation - 90% of Labour's whole campaign fund - without which the party could not have published the manifesto. The club also controlled a computer system, that was charged out to candidates in marginal seats at \$2,500 a time to use (Orsman, 1993a). Although, the party was said to have total access to the computerised canvassing data (Harris, 1993b), the leader remained as the only holder of its master copy.

Not surprisingly, the party officials saw the MMSC as a challenge to the existing party organisation and as an illegitimate power base for the leader<sup>156</sup>. The idea of creating a 'party within a party' was feared and resented<sup>157</sup> (Sheppard, 1998) as it would provide the club (and ultimately Moore himself) with significant influence over the future candidate selection. In fact, Maryan Street argues that Moore's decision to set up this separate organisation was the turning point for many party members.

...as soon as he did that, he undermined his own support base in the party, because the Labour Party will be incredibly loyal to its leader as long as that leader recognises that she or he is completely dependent on those people to get the work done. So as long as there is an acknowledgment of an inter-dependent relationship, then party members will be incredibly loyal to their leader. But the setting up of the Mike Moore Supporters Club broke that unspoken agreement, really, with the party membership. Suddenly it looked self-aggrandising, it looked as if Mike was out for Mike, not for Labour. And Mike defends that absolutely and says that: 'Well, I was out for me because that was good for Labour. I was very popular in the polls therefore it was good for Labour'. But what he didn't do was acknowledge the culture of the people who belonged to the Labour Party. So in that sense he broke the bond with the party membership. (Street, interview, 1998)

Moore repeatedly argues that to prove the transparency of the MMSC, he invited Street and Tony Timms to take up its directors' positions (Moore, interview, 1998). He also demanded the MMSC to be officially affiliated with the party, giving it a formal

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<sup>156</sup> Some of these concerns may have not been totally groundless. After being deposed as the leader, Moore showed willingness to use the canvassing data for his future political activities which included a possibility of setting up his own party (Edwards, 1993i). Sheppard was more certain. He wrote:

'Aware that he was isolated within the party hierarchy, Moore had attempted to forge a power base of his own through the creation of the Mike Moore Supporters' Club (MMSC)...' (Sheppard, 1998: 216).

<sup>157</sup> Considering the strong feeling of resentment felt by the EPLP officials towards the MMSC, it was ironic that an idea of having 'the Supporters Club' at every electorate for those 'who want to give their commitment to Labour's policies and election as Government, but who do not want the responsibilities and rights of full membership' was aired by Ruth Dyson, the then President at the 1992 Annual Conference (NZLP, 1992a: 4)

status similar to that of trade unions so that every branch of the party could have the MMSC members (Small, 1993b). Both requests were turned down. With regard to the latter request, Street explains:

Mike asked for the Mike Moore Supporters Club to be affiliated to the Labour Party. Now, we rejected that because we didn't believe the thing should have existed in the first place. And that it wasn't a legitimate organ for the party. What if Mike stopped being the leader, and we were left with this Mike Moore Supporters Club as an affiliate to the Labour Party? How could we justify having a supporters club for an individual affiliated to the Labour Party which is a collective organisation? (Street, interview, 1998)

After going through such a problematic working relationship, by the time of the 1993 leadership coup, Street had developed a negative view of the leader with whom she was originally determined to work constructively. When Labour lost the election on 6 November, she was in the firm belief that a leadership change, especially to Clark, was necessary as well as inevitable<sup>158</sup>.

I thought Helen would be Leader one day. But I didn't have a time frame on her at that point. I didn't know it was going to happen so quickly. But I was keen for it to happen during the time of my presidency. That was for sure. I thought that I would be a President who would help that happen. But that's only because I didn't expect Mike to stay on past two elections if we lost. (Street, interview, 1998)

It is important to remember that no matter how bad the relationship between the two offices was, the fact is that the Head Office does not directly choose the leader of the PLP. What is of interest, therefore, is how the troublesome relationship affected the caucus members' views of their leader. The antagonism between the two offices was well known in the caucus. Many MPs initially held both parties responsible for the diabolical relationship, as Caygill says of Dyson and Moore: 'On both sides, the relationship didn't work. Ruth didn't get on with Mike and Mike didn't get on with Ruth. And I blame both of them and ... at that time, neither tried very hard to make the relationship work' (Caygill, interview, 1996). Yet, when Moore continued to have problems with Dyson's successor, it enhanced the view that the leader had a problem in maintaining constructive working relationships with the EPLP officials. The manner in which Moore handled the problem also strengthened MPs' doubts over him. Caygill notes:

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<sup>158</sup> Even to date, Street and Moore find themselves in public disagreement. For example, see Street (1997a) and Moore (1997). Contrary to the view held by some (including Moore), Street argues that hostility did not emerge until after the election and that the relationship deteriorated when Moore was reprimanded by his caucus colleagues for his constant attack on his successor after the 1993 leadership change. Then, according to Street, the former leader re-directed his criticism and frustration at her because: 'he could no longer target Helen, because his colleagues wouldn't tolerate it, he targeted me for negative publicity. And he did that quite skilfully. And there was a greater tolerance for that amongst his colleagues, because Presidents come and Presidents go' (Street, interview, 1998).

There were people who had just given up on [Moore]. He would talk often at caucus in disparaging terms about the party organisation, which seemed to me to be foolish, unhelpful... just a bad thing for a leader to do. A sign of weakness. And it happened all the time. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

Also, during the election campaign, MPs and candidates were more closely in touch with the party officials and members, and thus likely to be influenced in their opinions of the leader. His troublesome relationship with the EPLP, especially in relation to the MMSC, raised some concerns among MPs. Judith Tizard, for example, recalls being asked to write cheques to the MMSC, without knowing the identity or purpose of the organisation. The MMSC intensified the concerns of those already apprehensive about his behaviour and judgement.

And... things like the Mike Moore Supporters Club, you know, indicated a deep suspicion [in] the party... I believe in an inclusive party, you work with what you've got. We're all volunteers in the end. So, you know, there is no point in making enemies when you don't need to, and I found, you know, things like the Mike More Supporters Club stuff really difficult to deal with because I'm also very unhappy with the party becoming a personal vehicle. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Instead of trying to work constructively with it, the leader was seen as avoiding the EPLP. Tizard continues: 'I'm sure the Mike Moore Supporters Club and the way the Leader's Office was used during the election campaign were an attempt to bypass the party' (Tizard, interview, 1998). Even Moore sympathisers agree that establishing the MMSC, although it was understandable somewhat in their view, was not a smart decision.

... there was always some concern about the Mike Moore Supporters Club in that it seemed to be a parallel structure to the party structure. Mike is a very sort of personal politician, and I think he felt the need for that kind of structure because of difficulties with the Labour Party's structure itself. Probably it's not unfair to say that some people in the Labour Party weren't always focused upon supporting Mike and winning victory, but were involved in other activities. Nevertheless, I personally don't think that the Mike Moore Supporters Club structure was a wise move. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

In sum, Moore was not judged by his caucus colleagues as successful in fulfilling the first expectation. Under his leadership, the PLP could not restore the trust and confidence of the EPLP as expected. In a sense, the situation was worse than before. Unlike the previous six years, the hostility and antagonism of the EPLP (especially the party hierarchy) was centred around the leader himself, while the PLP as a whole managed to escape any criticism from the party organisation. Worse still, as the cause of the deteriorating relationship was linked to Moore's own series of initiatives (such as the establishment of the MMSC), he was more likely to be held accountable for not only failing to accomplish the task but also for single-handedly aggravating the problem.

## **B. Policy expectation: re-establishing the party's identity as a centre-left party**

Apart from restoration of the EPLP and PLP relationship, the 'Labour Listens' campaign aimed to formulate the policy basis for the party's new identity in the post-Rogernomics era. The framework proposed by the 'Aims and Values' report and duly approved at the 1991 Party Conference was 'firmly rooted in the Labour tradition' (NZLP, 1991b:5). This was most evident in the three key areas identified as the focus of its social policy:

- \* **An end to poverty in New Zealand**  
This will be difficult to achieve, but Labour is determined to work toward this goal.
- \* **Fairness**  
This will require the distribution of wealth, and a commitment to overcoming inequality and injustice in society.
- \* **Enabling people and communities to live independent and fulfilling lives.**  
Labour is determined to increase opportunities so that people can participate and contribute more fully to New Zealand society. (NZLP, 1991b: 9)

To accomplish the above aims, abolishing the Employment Contracts Act (ECA), public provision of health, education, housing and early childhood services, a fair, efficient and progressive taxation system were all called for in the report (NZLP, 1991b: 10-11). In terms of the economic policy, the report basically endorsed the 'co-operative, negotiated economy' model advocated by Moore at the previous conference (NZLP, 1990: 25). The model accepted the open and international economy with competitive exchange rates and low inflation as the cornerstone, while assigning the government a 'conductor' role through which the efforts of individual businesses could be 'harmonised'. Labour was aiming to strike the right balance between 'what the market and those operating in it can do for themselves, and the role of government in promoting long term growth and job creation, improving competitiveness and harnessing new technologies'. The economic growth was not regarded as an end in itself. It was to 'create real prosperity, distribute wealth fairly and create jobs' (NZLP, 1991b: 12). The key to achieve all these goals was a 'new partnership' the government would form with business, trade unions, and the communities (NZLP, 1991b: 13).

The basic stance and directions established in the 'Aims and Values' report were continued through the second stage of the 'Labour Listens' campaign. By the time more detailed policies were discussed at the regional conferences in autumn 1992, according to a political journalist, 'the controversialists and controversy had vanished' from the party. The policy paper, *Moving Ahead* was adopted without significant

objection at the Annual Conference held on 4-6 September (James, 1993d: 77). The final policies for the election year - Labour's 1993 election manifesto, *Jobs. Growth. Health.*, and four more specific, detailed policies released preceding the manifesto (*Let's Get New Zealand Working Again* (policies for jobs); *Labour's Plan for Economic Growth and Jobs* (economic policies); *Labour's Plan for a Fairer New Zealand* (social policies); and *Labour's Plan for the Environment* (environmental policies)) - were more or less based upon the results of the three-year campaign<sup>159</sup>.

Like restoration of the EPLP's trust, the 'Labour Listens' campaign and the following policy formulation process failed to produce the desired result – elimination of policy differences in the caucus. Thanks to the 'Labour Listens' campaign, these differences were not so evident in the first two years of Moore's leadership. The basic framework formulated through the campaign was no more than a general indication of Labour's future intent and was agreed upon by the caucus. But, when more detailed policies were formed as the 1993 election approached, these differences started to develop into divisions.

Details were not the only potential cause of contentions. At a more fundamental level, some MPs started to question what and whom Labour was standing for under Moore's leadership. The caucus left had long argued that the party needed to regain its traditional support base, which was lost during its fourth Labour Government years. However, they became increasingly sceptical about the leader's commitment to this task. From the beginning, he insisted that Labour needed to attract voters beyond its traditional supporters. As early as at the 1990 Party Conference, Moore stated:

Of course we stand for the sick unable to help themselves, the aged, lonely and vulnerable, the young eager to learn, women at home and in the workplace, the homeless, the jobless, those who dream and work for a safer, greener, more just, kinder New Zealand.

But that coalition is still too small to win those key seats. We must think today of the Hamilton Easts, the Birkenheads.

We need those seats so we can help those for whom only Labour thinks and works.

We must stand beside and for the battlers who struggle to improve their conditions and opportunities.

Those battlers, living alone, trying to give their kids - who are under threat - a fair go.

Those battlers on low incomes, doing part-time work to get some carpet or a bit extra for their homes who could lose penal and overtime rates. (NZLP, 1990: 25)

Initially, as seen in the above speech, how the new constituent that Moore sought to lure was different from the traditional Labour supporters was unclear. In 1990 McRobie described the Birkenhead and Hamilton East electorates as 'moderately affluent' (McRobie, 1990: 140) and 'a substantially middle income electorate'

<sup>159</sup> For detailed analysis of Labour's policies, see James (1993d and 1993f) and McLeay (1994).

(McRobie, 1990: 147), respectively. Yet, Moore's above illustration of 'battlers' had a distinctive impression of those of the working class.

As time went on, Moore's intention became clearer - Labour should appeal to the middle class. At the 1991 Annual Conference, he argued: 'Labour will work to reclaim the middle ground in New Zealand' (NZLP, 1991a: 28). He also said: 'We still have to win over the middle income earner who now feels betrayed by National and wants to know what Labour would do in Government' (NZLP, 1991a: 29). What was more important was that Labour's main constituent in Moore's mind appeared to have shifted to this group. What was once considered a necessary supplement to the main 'coalition' for winning an election had significantly increased its prominence. In September 1992, Moore claimed that Labour's 'hearts beat for those who are at the bottom, for those who struggle' (Thomas, 1992). But in the same month, Moore told the 1992 Annual Conference: 'These middle, hardworking New Zealanders, the panelbeater, the nurse, the shopkeeper, they are our people' (NZLP, 1992a: 99).

This increasing importance of the middle class continued into the election year. At the 1993 Annual Congress, Moore identified '[s]truggling middle aged and middle class New Zealanders' as Labour's target constituent: 'The issue is what can a Labour Government do for the 40-somethings?' (NZLP, 1993: 21-22). Not surprisingly, when the party's official targeted electorate was defined at the beginning of the election campaign in fictional characters 'Ken' and 'Marion', it was not 'those who are at the bottom'. Rather, they were the middle-class couple, characterised as 'not so rich that they do not have to care but not so poor that they could apply for any state assistance' (Stone, 1993a). More specifically, Ken - representing the male target group - was described as someone who 'believes that there is an economic recovery but does not necessarily accept that Labour has changed its ways from the 1984-90 term in office' whereas Marion - the female target group representative - was described as 'anxious about the prospects for her children, worrying about their education, work prospects and health'. Marion also had concerns in the law and order issues (Stone, 1993a).

Those swinging voters (National supporters in 1990 but undecided in 1993) might be suggested by the polling data as vital for Labour victory. Yet, by officially identifying this group as Labour's targeted group and by asking the candidates to be mindful of them during the campaign (Stone, 1993b), Moore unwittingly led his doubters to suspect that the leader was deviating from its traditional constituency and its interests.

Such suspicion intensified with Moore's position in certain policy areas, too. His intention came into question especially in two areas, namely, the tax policy and industrial relations policy.

With strong opponents such as Dunne<sup>160</sup> and proponents like Lange both contained within the caucus, any tax increase was guaranteed to be controversial. This was one of the issues, which, in Lange's words, 'if the leadership forces debate on', 'the guns will be turned inwards' (Lange, 1991b). One journalist reported that out of fear of upsetting the middle-income voters and of causing caucus disunity, Moore was trying to avoid settling the issue altogether<sup>161</sup> (Kilroy, 1993e). Richard Prebble described how Moore diverted attention away from contentious and dividing issues at caucus meetings for the sake of party unity:

Mike says 'Hang on a minute, let's look instead at what Labour voters are asking us most about, striking people in their own lives - health charges, education, and so on'. (Laugesen, 1993a)

Looking back at this period, Moore concedes that the task of coming up with a new set of policies without risking party unity was more than a difficult task. 'There were differences that perhaps were irreconcilable... I tried to keep them [both right-wing and left-wing] together. It was very hard work... possibly impossible?' (Moore, interview, 1998).

Probably as a reflection of this situation in the caucus, Labour's economic policy in the 1993 manifesto offered a wide range of un-costed proposals which created a 'soft' and 'extremely flexible agenda' (Small and Harris, 1993b) so that varying views of the caucus members could be accommodated<sup>162</sup>. Throughout the 1993 election campaign, Labour had to fight off National's constant claim that it would have to raise tax to finance its policy promises. Despite some expensive promises such as abolishing community service cards and removal of hospital part charges, Moore strenuously denied that a tax increase would be necessary. His argument was that the party would obtain sufficient revenue through a broadened tax base accomplished by an estimated 4-5% economic growth. Asked what the party would do should such a growth rate be not achieved, the finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen said that 'we will revisit and reschedule the spending path' (Small and Harris, 1993a).

Moore was also ambiguous about his stance on the industrial relations policy, or more specifically the Employment Contracts Act (ECA). Although a return to compulsory unionism was ruled out as early as in May 1991 (Collins, 1991), Labour, led by the spokesperson in this area, Clark, was constantly adamant about the repeal of the act. Moore never openly challenged this stance. At the Annual Conferences in 1992 and 1993, Moore asserted: 'The Employment Contracts Act will go. It is an act of

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<sup>160</sup> See, for example, Hunt (1992) and 'Target 'middle-income' vote', *The Evening Post*, 15 April 1992, p.29.

<sup>161</sup> Moore strongly rebuts this (Moore, 2000).

<sup>162</sup> As a result, the accuracy of the costing of Labour's election promises came under attack from National. See, Small and Harris (1993a).

malice' (NZLP, 1992a: 98; 1993a: 20). In 1992, he went further to say: 'The piece of legislation has meant the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the middle hardworking family stands on a trapdoor' (NZLP, 1992a: 98).

However, how seriously he considered the ECA 'an act of malice' was unclear. In his book, *Fighting for New Zealand*, published in 1993, he criticised the ECA for having brought workers' wages down. At the same time, throughout the book, he praised companies which had benefited from the labour market deregulation brought about by the act. For example, he wrote: 'It's amazing that successful private companies, like Lion Nathan or Fortex, are more democratic, seek more advice and involvement from their workforce than do publicly-owned corporations' (Moore, 1993a: 91). He was also benevolent towards the Chief Executive of Lion Nathan, Doug Myers, and his achievement: 'Douglas Myers took over the remnants of the Bond empire and now Lion Nathan is one of the biggest brewers in the Southern Hemisphere. It returns to New Zealand profits of thousands of shareholders, giving security, guaranteeing jobs at home, lifting our technology and enhancing our competitiveness<sup>163</sup>' (Moore, 1993a: 30).

The problem of such open praise is that Myers was also the then Chairperson of the New Zealand Business Roundtable, which had been a strong advocate for labour market deregulations<sup>164</sup>. Myers himself was reported to have described the ECA as an unqualified success and the single greatest breakthrough in New Zealand's economic reform programme (Field, 1992). Naturally, Moore's behaviour - calling the ECA 'an act of malice' while expressing admiration for individuals and companies which were enshrining the very act - was seen as inconsistent, and it raised doubts over his commitment to Labour's pledge to repeal the act. These doubts were ultimately confirmed by his refusal to join Clark in a factory visit in order to clear the confusion over the party's stance on the ECA towards the end of the 1993 election campaign (see Chapter 3).

Although his stance was generally supported by the moderate/right group of the caucus, Moore was subject to criticism by the increasingly impatient caucus left. They argued that his concentration on the middle class voters left the traditional Labour support base to the Alliance to capture, and that it ultimately cost Labour the election. During her challenge, Clark said that Labour had to fight throughout the campaign the 'allegations from the Alliance that there were no substantial differences between the [National and Labour] parties and that therefore the electorate might as well vote for who they really wanted, which was an invitation to vote Alliance' (Orsman, 1993b).

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<sup>163</sup> How Myers regarded Moore was unclear. Nevertheless, Myers said in 1998: 'Labour still seems to hanker after national plans, "accords" with "social partners" and "industry policies" that were abandoned years ago in most other countries' (Herbert, 1998). Of course, 'accords' and 'social partners' were the central elements of Moore's policy views.

<sup>164</sup> See The New Zealand Business Roundtable (1996), Chapter 4.



Probably Moore's success (or failure) to satisfy the caucus expectation for re-establishing the party's identity as a centre-left party was most closely scrutinised by the caucus left in his willingness to separate the party from the recent, troubled past.

According to one former Cabinet Minister, Moore was sympathetic towards Rogernomics although he had 'many disagreements with David [Lange] and Roger [Douglas]' in those days (Caygill, interview, 1998). Or, in Lange's words,

He was not in any way a 'position taker' against Roger. In fact he was quite the reverse... it would be wrong to say that he fought any sort of a battle against developments at the time. Most battles were fought in his absence overseas. (Lange, interview, 1996)

However, due to his prominence in the contentious Government as the third ranked Minister and later the Prime Minister, Moore tended to be seen by his newer, 'post-Rogernomics', opponents as a part of 'where Labour went wrong under Richard Prebble and Sir Roger Douglas'<sup>165</sup> (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). Moore agrees:

They came in with the purpose that everything the Labour Government did was wrong. I personified what was wrong. They were going to change it. (Moore, interview, 1998)

His unwillingness to make a clean break from the 1984-1990 era certainly enhances such a view and turned many newer MPs against him. As Caygill puts it:

... most of the people who were elected after 1990 or in 1990 or in 1993 - the two intakes - were relatively unsympathetic to what had happened between 84 and 90. You know, they thought that that period was either a mistake or at least responsible for the party's defeat in 1990. And by 1993, they thought that period... events of the period were still a burden that the Labour Party was having to carry. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Indeed one of the 1993 intake believed that an apology for some actions taken by the fourth Labour Government was essential for the party's identity re-building process.

I mean, Helen said it. Mike Moore never said it. He went to the first conference after 1990 and said that time for it was over. That was kind of like not saying: 'I'm actually really sorry about the way some things turned out.' I actually feel like that we should apologise when we get things wrong. I mean not everything. We don't have to apologise for the whole of the 80s, but what we do have to do is apologise for some of the consequences which are quite horrific for a lot of people. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

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<sup>165</sup> Roger Douglas and Richard Prebble are two of the most controversial figures in the fourth Labour Government, mainly for their free market orientations and their dogmatic approach. One Labour MP says that the latter's election defeat in 1993 was 'almost a cause of celebration' (Tizard, interview, 1998). The pair left the Labour Party to form a new political vehicle, the Association of Consumers and Tax Payers (ACT), in 1994 to pursue their political visions.

The problem for Moore was that those who shared this MP's sentiments in the caucus were on the increase.

Although not mentioned by the Moore opponents as an important variable for the 1993 leadership change, Moore and his supporters have claimed that the former leader was ousted partly because of his conservatism (or political incorrectness in his words) on moral issues, that were vital to the influential group of the Labour Party and the newer, left-leaning MPs. The caucus left, who were generally supported by trade unionists and feminists on their selections (Sheppard, 1998) as well as central figures in the party Head Office tended to have more liberal views on those issues. A Mike Moore loyalist, Jack Elder, who refers to this group as 'trendy liberals', argues that the 1993 leadership battle was about 'political philosophy in the end' (Elder, interview, 1998). Apart from Moore's sympathy towards Rogemonics, Elder points to the importance of the role which moral issues played in the coup.

Mike represented a point of view of Labour politics which the trendy liberals in the Labour Party didn't like. They're not... they are not traditional Labour people. They're trendy liberals basically. They are a different animal, and they saw Mike as old-fashioned, conservative... I mean conservative with a whole lot of things they're liberal about... He's actually very liberal about some issues, and he has stood up to be counted on issues that they wouldn't dream of standing up to be counted on.

... I mean, if you're interested in feminist issues, for instance, that's just an example, he'd be the very last person you'd have as a leader (laugh). As the night follows the day. He was not that sort of person. And likewise... if you've got a deep and abiding interest in issues concerning the rights of sexual minorities and anything like that, although he's liberal on those things, he... didn't have the right credentials. (Elder, interview, 1998)

#### Moore as the policy maker – was he responsible for Labour's policies?

One point needs clarification here. The Moore opponents' claim that he failed to satisfy their expectations to re-establish the party's centre-left identity implies that he had substantial control over the party policies. But is such an implication accurate?

According to the party's rules, all Labour Party policies have to go through a required process including Policy Committees, regional and national annual conferences before they are finally approved by the Policy Council to become the manifesto. And the 1993 election manifesto was no exception. Constitutionally, the leader had no special prerogative over official policies. *In theory*, thus, any dissatisfaction with Labour's policies should be directed to all the parties involved in the policy making process, not solely to the leader.

Not surprisingly, the anti-Moore MPs expressed general satisfaction with the 1993 party policies in the main. Instead, their frustration was focused upon Moore's

*personal* dealings with them. In spite of the constitutional arrangement, *in reality*, the PLP leaders always enjoy some discretion in policy making. As Street notes:

... leaders are always very persuasive and powerful. There is no doubt about that. ... There is always going to be an imbalance of power there and the leader is going to exert a disproportionate amount of power. (Street, interview, 1998)

In comparison to previous leaders, Moore was inclined to use his discretion more freely. As David Caygill, a former finance spokesperson between 1990 and 1991, comments:

I didn't think that Mike had the grasp of policy that was necessary in a competent leader. I felt that he often made things up on the spot. A good leader sometimes has to do that; David Lange certainly did it on more than one occasion. But Mike did it all the time, and this was unsettling and worrying, certainly to me... somebody who had been the finance spokesperson in the party. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Moore was also keen to use his power over the manifesto. Street attests that the former leader attempted to include his own 'off-the-wall' ideas in it (Street, interview, 1998). It is also pointed out that the Policy Council occasionally had to agree to consider some of Moore's proposals at a late stage of policy making process only because of his status as the leader (Northey, interview, 1998).

Moore's personal influence was observed in his presentation of the already set official policies during the election campaign, too. The anti-Moore group's particular concern related to his unwillingness to vigorously promote or adhere to the official party policies, through which he could set/control the general tone of the party's policy direction. To publicly disagree with the leader could have only damaged the party. Hence the frustration of Clark and her supporters over their inability to tackle the poverty issue more openly (Campbell, 1994a)

Moore's reluctance to endorse the party policy on the ECA during the election campaign was another example where the leader exerted his discretion. Street also recalls the leader's objection to the release of another potentially controversial policy, the Pacific Island policy:

I said: 'Come on. It's done. Let's get it out.' and Mike said: 'That's for family consumption only. Put it out in the Labour Party but we are not going to have a public release of the policy. We are not going to publicise it'. Because he thought... it would alienate red-necks, you know, and we wanted votes of red-necks as well...well, he did. And I was horrified, just horrified at that - that Mike was going to manipulate the manifesto. (Street, interview, 1998)

Also, according to Street, Moore did not want to publicise certain policies in the approved, detailed manifesto. Moore did not want to 'upset anybody' or 'mark us out anywhere'. As a result, the party published a manifesto which was 'a series of bullet

points that were key points about policy' and 'not terribly detailed'. She further asserts:

Mike wasn't interested in the minutiae of policy. He wanted to be able to make broad brush statements. He wanted to be able to say: 'Under Labour, things will be better.' That's about as detailed as Mike ever wanted to get about anything. (Street, interview, 1998)

The implication given by such approaches was that 'if we fudged issues, then people could interpret it how they liked' (Dyson, interview, 1998). Not surprisingly, such an ambiguous policy stance by the leader was seen by many - especially left-leaning - MPs as disingenuous, seriously damaging the party's credibility as a centre-left party<sup>166</sup>. Clark recollected the frustration she and Cullen<sup>167</sup> experienced with the leader in relation to the tax policy during the election campaign:

It [the 1993 manifesto] simply wasn't budgeted...We were totally locked into a manifesto that was not costed and that no-one could deliver on. Mike [Moore] never faced up to the fact that more social spending means more government spending or facing up to a deficit.

So, instead, he said we would not put up taxes - and nobody believed him... Michael Cullen and I wanted him to come clean and say there'd have to be increases for those on \$70,000-plus, but Mike wouldn't hear of it<sup>168</sup>. (McManus, 1994).

Maharey indicates that such lack of clarity was counterproductive to Labour's image as a credible alternative government.

How we came out of the 1990 election - obviously thrashed because people didn't like what we stood for, obviously.... I think a lot of people were very keen to know what we stood for and it was left wing... And so, that lack of clarity, I think, caused a lot of people concern that maybe we would stumble into government again... And there would be a return to where we were in the 1990's - and just pick up where we left off. And that I don't think was acceptable to the trade union movement obviously, and also to a range of other constituencies that supported Labour. So, that lack of clarity was a real problem, given that context. (Maharey, interview, 1998).

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<sup>166</sup> In February 1992, Lange warned: 'The hard lesson of the recent past is that politicians may be actors but they can't be imposters' (Lange, 1992)

<sup>167</sup> Interestingly, before the election, Cullen refused to follow his leader and to categorically deny any potential tax raise if Labour became the Government. He said that no finance minister could honestly rule out such possibilities (Kilroy, 1993a).

<sup>168</sup> When Moore learnt of Clark's attack on his policy stance after the election, he was 'very surprised.' He insists that his former deputy never expressed her disagreement on final policy positions before the election either publicly or privately (Moore, interview, 1998). Hunt agrees that there was no policy disagreement between the two. 'No, I don't think so at all because they talked everyday about these things [policy issues], and I was usually part of the discussions, and involved in the Strategy Committee and that sort of thing. I don't actually think that [policy disagreement] was of very great importance at all' (Hunt, interview, 1998). Cullen, however, admits that there was some disagreement. '[I]t's probably fair to say that Mike was keen to downplay certain things like industrial relations legislation changes, where some of us would perhaps have promoted those rather more strongly. So, yes, there were some differences of opinion in that regard. On those sorts of issues, my opinions would have been rather closer to Helen's than they were to Mike's' (Cullen, interview, 1998).

Lange concurred and blamed Moore's personal handling of policy issues for Labour's election loss. After the election the former leader wrote:

The voters had no reason to believe in that critical difference between the parties which induces a determined vote for change.

Where there was a difference, it was fudged.

In my electorate, for instance, many people would have been liberated by the news that Labour intended to put state house rents on an income-related basis. But it was a contingent promise, possibly to be implemented, and rarely mentioned by the leadership in case it frightened the middle classes. (Lange, 1993a)

Lange concluded his analysis in the following words:

I don't know when the next election will be held, but I want the Labour Party to contest it.

If we'd fought last Saturday's, we'd be a majority government now. (Lange, 1993a)

In his critics' view, Moore's failure at the second expectation was clear. Some of the earlier uncommitted supporters such as Maharey, Dalziel, Hodgson, and Blincoe were now firmly against him. In their judgement, as Street notes, the more distinctive and detailed Labour policy they hoped for 'was not going to come under him' (Street, interview, 1998).

Moore's failure in both achieving unity between the EPLP and in re-establishing the party's renewed political identity meant that his leadership was increasingly dependent upon his success in realising the other expectation - winning the 1993 election. Moore himself was aware that the anti-Moore feeling was rising, and that the party officials, in particular, had been strengthening their position through the candidate selection procedure (this point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Two and half years after he lost the leadership, Moore commented, 'I knew that. My chance of holding the leadership was to win the election' (*Assignment*, 20 June 1996, TV1, 7:30pm).

### **C. Elective expectation: winning the 1993 election**

The chance of fulfilling the third expectation of the Moore leadership - winning the 1993 election - appeared slim when the PLP returned to Parliament after the 1990 election. However, according to the *Heylen-One Network News* polls, by April 1991 Labour was the most popular political party. Although from this point onwards the party's popularity fluctuated and occasionally slipped behind either the Alliance or

National, Labour led the popularity contests during most of Moore's leadership period<sup>169</sup>.

Even at the personal level, Moore performed reasonably well. Although he trailed a former National Minister, Winston Peters, for most of the 1992-1993 period in the Heylen-*One Network News*' 'most preferred Prime Minister' polls in which respondents were asked to name their preferred politician for PM, he constantly outranked Jim Bolger<sup>170</sup>.

Considering his high personal popularity, it came as no surprise that Moore saw himself as a key factor for winning the coming election. Knowing that his survival was solely based on winning the election and that he was not enjoying the confidence of the EPLP officials, Moore was reported to have taken on extra staff on short-term contracts and put extra resources into the campaign, which eventually used up most of the annual \$1.4 million budget allocated for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (Orsman, 1993d). Also, as part of this effort, the already mentioned MMSC was established. Maharey notes:

I think Mike understood that the election was a big one for him. He had to win it if he wanted to stay as Leader because Labour tends to be pretty ruthless on its leaders historically, and I think he understood this was the opportunity for him to become Prime Minister or there would be potential for a change of Leader. And he had pretty well positioned himself with people in the Leader's Office and a small group of people who'd supported him. And essentially he was going for broke to see if he could win. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

The turnaround for Labour and Moore's fortunes came in July 1993 when the then independent MP, Winston Peters, established his own political vehicle, New Zealand First. This formation of a populist party (Miller, 1997) was believed to have cost Labour's popularity by taking away anti-Government votes away from it (Small, 1993a).

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<sup>169</sup> The results of the opinion polls and Labour's positions during Moore's leadership tenure varied from one research organisation to another. The Heylen-*One Network News* polls showed that between July 1991 and August 1993 Labour was over taken by another party only once (by the Alliance at the end of 1991), whereas the results of the *National Business Review* commissioned opinion polls pictured the contest being much more competitive. Between November 1991 and August 1993, Labour surrendered the top position several times to both National and the Alliance. Both polls, however, registered National's lead over Labour after August 1993.

<sup>170</sup> Similarly, the *National Business Review* (NBR) commissioned polls constantly showed that Moore was enjoying higher performance satisfaction ratings than his counterpart in the National Party, whose satisfaction ratings never exceeded those of dissatisfaction. His personal popularity was obvious in the NBR-Consultus poll result on the four party leaders (Moore, Bolger, Peters, and Jim Anderton), released in late October 1993 (NBR, 29 October 1993, p4). In the poll, the Labour leader topped three sections, which asked the respondents: 1) which leader was most in touch with and understood ordinary New Zealanders; 2) who would provide the strongest and most effective leadership (tied with Peters at 23 per cent); and 3) which leader was the most decent and likeable man. He came second and third in the other two sections, that asked which leader had the best policies for the country's future (Bolger came first), and who was most likely to keep his promise (Anderton and Peters equal first), respectively.

### Evaluation of the election result

There were two completely different views of Moore's performance in terms of the third expectation in the caucus. Some members - mostly Moore sympathisers - considered the result satisfactory. (This point will be discussed in the next chapter.) Others - the Moore opponents - strongly disagreed. While stressing that she did not hold Moore personally responsible for the result, Dyson comments:

I thought it was terrible... We didn't nearly win it. National nearly lost it. Our vote didn't increase at all. In 1990, we were the most hated Government in New Zealand history. We got annihilated. Three years of re-building and we did about the same. It's not a good result. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

As far as his critics were concerned, three factors worked against Moore. Firstly, as already noted, he was seen by his opponents as responsible for preventing Labour from effectively distinguishing itself from National in policy terms, which they believed to be a major contributing factor to its election defeat.

Secondly, Labour's campaign was regarded as highly personalised by the leader in terms of its contents and organisation (i.e., the MMSC). The risk of taking such an approach is that people would naturally expect him to take personal responsibility for the result<sup>171</sup>.

Thirdly, the 1993 election was Moore's second election loss in a row as the leader. Although he led the party for only several weeks before the 1990 election, it was nevertheless lost under his leadership. As Caygill notes, his 'self-sacrificial' decision to become the leader in 1990 gave some legitimacy to the questioning of Moore's entitlement to lead the party to election victory in 1996, based upon his track record.

...it's a little unfair to say that Mike had two chances, because one wouldn't really regard 1990 as a fair chance. Mind you, he accepted the leadership in that election, and in that sense, he must be said to have taken his chance. Not many leaders get three elections before they are successful. That's what Mike was asking. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Street agrees:

The rule of thumb in the Labour Party is that you get two shots at an election. And if you lose both of them, it's time for a change... The rule of thumb is... usually was that you get... you get one chance at leading into an election and losing and you get... if you have the support of your colleagues, you'll get a second chance just to show that there might have been some factors that were

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<sup>171</sup> Moore publicly accepted the responsibility for the election, while furiously rejecting his opponents' interpretation of the election outcome for Labour and his personal responsibility for it. '[O]f course, I accept the responsibility. And of course there are things we ought to do better. But I do not accept the logic of David Lange and others. I just can't accept that' (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 26 November 1993)

running against you that were beyond your control in your first election. (Street, interview, 1998)

### **The impact of failing to fulfil the expectations**

It has been documented that under the Moore leadership, Labour's divisions were not fully resolved. His relationships with the party officials, most notably Ruth Dyson, and Tony Timms (and later Maryan Street) deteriorated significantly to the point at which they were not reconcilable. In particular, his decision to set up the MMSC for the election campaign was regarded by many as his effort to bypass and disregard the legitimate extra-Parliamentary organisation. At the same time, Moore was seen as impeding Labour's process of re-establishing itself as a credible centre-left party by obscuring some key policies during the election campaign.

Moore's failure to satisfy those expectations appear to affect the positions of the caucus left (including Clark) - specifically the majority of the 1990 new intake. The latter group came into national politics in response to the policies of the fourth Labour Government. They were motivated to restore healthy respect for the EPLP within the PLP, and to return the party to its traditional values. After three years, and with the 1993 election looming, those 1990 'uncommitted supporters' were opposing Moore. As far as this group was concerned, when Labour lost the election, a leadership change was inevitable. Then, as one Moore opponent notes: '... we were confronted with "Do we want another three years with Mike as the Leader of the Opposition?" And the answer was "No"' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

Although Moore's failure to deliver on the expectations was a significant factor in his demise, it alone cannot fully explain why he lost the leadership. Now, we examine how he handles the concerns.

### **Section C: Dealing with the concerns**

Upon returning to Parliament after the 1990 election, Moore was well aware of his colleagues' concerns over his leadership style.

#### **A. Policy concern: erratic behaviour**

To counter his inconsistent and impulsive nature and prove his opponents' concerns groundless, Moore constantly emphasised 'discipline' - not only for himself but also for the entire party. In *Fighting for New Zealand*, he wrote: 'The lesson I have learnt is that good government is made in opposition. The discipline, respect, integrity and purpose you show in opposition prepares you to exercise power properly' (Moore, 1993a: 191). As a sign of discipline, he openly declared that he would not make expensive, extravagant promises, saying 'it takes discipline and iron will not to say what



people want to hear' (McLoughlin, 1992: 60). After becoming the leader of the Labour Party in 1990, he had referred to himself as the least promising politician 'New Zealand had ever seen' (Moore, 1993c: 120). He said: 'I was determined, no matter the pressure, that I would resist the political urge for the easy line' (Moore, 1993a: 190). 'You can get elected on false poll-driven promises, you can win the Beehive. But what then? You are perpetually under siege, you lose any pretence to leadership and moral authority. If the people's expectations are raised too high, then crash down, obviously they lose faith' (Moore, 1993c: 120).

It is doubtful whether his effort produced the intended results for Moore. Despite his self-restraint, he was still regarded by his colleagues as a 'populist' who liked to make policies based on their popular appeal without undergoing a proper consultation process. In addition, Moore also failed to curtail his impulsive behaviour, which was occasionally displayed in the public (Northey, 1998a). This led the caucus members and party officials to question his consistency; he had been demanding self-discipline from his colleagues, but was he exercising it himself? Asked to describe Moore's leadership style, one of the 1990 new intake, simply replies, 'erratic'. Her/his following comment is representative of the prevalent feelings in the caucus during the 1990-1993 period.

...whenever he went on TV, I would hold my breath because I had absolutely no idea whether he was going to be brilliant or stupid. That was the trouble. That's why I say erratic is his strongest feature... [T]here were occasions of sheer brilliance, but there were other occasions where he just came across as an idiot. That was always my sense right throughout that period. It's that he was unreliable in that regard; you didn't know whether he was going to come out as absolute gem or something so stupid... (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

As James pointed out (1993e: 163-165), Moore was a man of many paradoxes. Paradoxes create inconsistency, and inconsistency had been certainly a characteristic of his behaviour. In 1989, Hubbard wrote:

Inconsistency is prime among the accusations made against Moore. His critics say he is so captivated by his own slogans that he fails to notice that some of them contradict each other. (Hubbard, 1989)

One of his books published prior to the 1993 election provided a good example. In it, he wrote: 'Catchy advertising slogans may help win the Treasury benches, but then what?' (Moore, 1993a: 16). Despite these words, the book contained many such slogans (such as 'reinventing' and 'renewal').

In response to these problems, Moore was reported to have consciously tried to monitor his behaviour when he had to explain or discuss ideas and policies to the media and public. He reduced his appearances on the media, and attempted not to leap from one obscure topic to another without any logical linkage between them. One political

reporter noted that during her interview with the Labour leader in March 1993, he repeatedly checked himself 'from launching into free association, muttering to himself "I've got to keep away from the stuff that worries people"' (Laugesen, 1993a).

The real test came when the election campaign went into full swing. Since the election campaign was designed around the leader's personality, his public and media exposure (and thus the risk of disclosing his problems) significantly increased. As the party's 'most potent weapon but potentially its biggest weaknesses' (Rapson, 1993), Moore was required to practice discipline more strictly than ever.

The result of his effort was mixed. One journalist noticed some improvement: 'he has begun to get a grip on himself' (James, 1993e: 164). On 19 October Moore himself boasted that Labour was campaigning 'to govern not just to win'. He admitted that the campaign was not as newsworthy as those of other parties', but he said that it was 'disciplined' and showing real courage<sup>172</sup>. However, his behaviour was not totally under control. The then political editor of *The Evening Post*, John Goulter, who accompanied Moore on the campaign trail, reported:

The speech finished, then comes a phrase that is a warning signal to anyone who has seen Moore perform. "There's just one more thing I'd like to say". This is when notorious Moore rambles begin, the streams of heartfelt but often incoherent ideas. (Goulter, 1993c)

The discipline meant fewer improvisations from Moore, but most importantly it applied to policies and promises (Rapson, 1993). Moore personally regarded political confidence as the most pivotal issue in the current politics: 'The biggest problem I face is regaining the confidence of the people and trust in our system'<sup>173</sup> (Moore, 1993c: 128). People's confidence in the idea of government was lost, Moore argued, because the past governments had been elected on 'poll-driven promises, promises made to win an election, not to govern a country' (Moore, 1993a: 189-190). Hence, as already mentioned, Moore's decision to become 'the least promising politician New Zealand had ever seen'.

However, the idea of 'the least promising politician' posed a problem. By 'the least promising', Moore appeared to mean two things, both of which were problematic. Firstly, he seemed to indicate that he would not promise things that he could not keep as the Prime Minister. According to this definition, if he was the least promising politician,

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<sup>172</sup> See 'Discipline' behind low-key approach', *The New Zealand Herald*, 19 October 1993, Sec.1, p.5.

<sup>173</sup> People's trust in him seems to have important significance to Moore as a person. 'The politicians I most admire... all owed their success to an affectionate and trusting relationship between their personal power and the people' (Moore, 1993c: 124). The confidence issue almost became his personal mission. 'If I can build new confidence in the idea of government and renew the belief that people can influence their neighbourhood and nation with new ideas based on old values of civic engagement and democratic involvement, then I will have served my historic purpose' (Moore, 1993a: 191-192).

it would mean that he would accomplish the least, make the smallest differences to the existing situation. His intention of making the Labour Opposition 'pr[o]pose and prepare' instead of just 'oppose and depose' (Moore, 1993a: 16) might be noble, but how could Labour expect those who wanted a change of government to vote for it when it was (implicitly) admitting little difference would be made under the Labour Government?

Secondly, he appeared to mean that he would restrict policy areas in which he would make any commitment, leaving the other areas obligation free. Moore stated during the election campaign: 'You can't break words you haven't given' (Goulter, 1993c). An implication of this definition was that as few promises as possible should be made so that the government could maximise its leverage without fear of being held responsible by the voter. What follows this logic is that where promises had to be made, they should be kept vague and general so various interpretations would be possible<sup>174</sup>. It was this second definition that appeared to become more dominant as the election approached<sup>175</sup>. Moore's unwillingness or inability to clarify several vital issues left the further impression that he could not do so due to the lack of consistency or adherence.

Overall, witnessing their leader struggling to handle policy issues did not give much confidence to some caucus members who were already suspicious of his character; if he was not equipped with the discipline to cope with demands as the Leader of the Opposition, how could he handle those as the Prime Minister? (Blincoe, interview, 1997)

### The election campaign

Moore's 'erratic' tendency was most evidently displayed on election night, especially in the speech, which he himself admitted was 'the worst election night speech in history' (Moore, 1995) and came as a confirmation of what his doubters had long been worried about. His performance signified his erratic nature and inclination to be a poor-judge – this time of both the election result and the public mood (Levine and Roberts, 1994b: 65)<sup>176</sup>. In the wake of the leadership challenge, Moore explained his behaviour on election night as follows:

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<sup>174</sup> It is hard to imagine how this definition of 'the least promising politician' could increase public confidence in politics and politicians. Issuing a bad cheque (not keeping election promises made) damages one's credibility. But asking for a blank cheque (asking voters to vote for him/her while making vague promises) cannot restore his/her reputation.

<sup>175</sup> The then Service Workers' Union national secretary, Mark Gosche certainly had this view. He said in 1994: 'That was really the crunch for us. It worried us that we had a leader who was backing away from the policies Labour was absolutely emphatic on. We wanted a leader who carried our policy. We were sick of 10 years of the parliamentary wing doing as it pleased, and the party being told to get stuffed' (Rudman, 1994).

<sup>176</sup> Some caucus members are more sympathetic towards Moore. For example, Cullen says: '... the election night speech, I think... far too much has been made of that. I think what's got to be recognised is that the moment when Mike gave that speech, he had reason to believe, on the basis of the information he had just been given, that we could... we were still going to win that election... It

Of course I made mistakes. And I will make them again. But I will make them in the spirit of generosity. I'll not make them behind closed doors. Of course, I make mistakes. Who hasn't? (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 26 November 1993)

Although the controversial speech did not initiate the move towards a leadership change, it certainly hastened it, by heightening the opponents' concerns that had been accumulating over his leadership tenure: he was too unreliable and inconsistent to hold the position to represent the party and its policy positions.

I know that Mike always used to get up and say: 'I couldn't have lost the election on the election night. People had already cast their votes', you know. And we were going, 'Yes, we know, but it showed again what you were capable of doing', you know. And there it all was on public television, the most embarrassing sort of performance that I had ever seen. And so it was really at that point that the decision finally - 'Well, actually we need to do something about this' had to happen. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

## MMP

After the 1993 election, there was a new factor which exacerbated the opponents' concern: the arrival of MMP endorsed by the referendum. As mentioned in Chapter 3, under the new proportional representation system, it was widely recognised that political parties would need to 'brand' themselves clearly by offering distinguishable policy identities. In this light, Moore's instinct to 'blur the message, not clarify it, in the interest of claiming the fuzzy middle ground' (the instinct well displayed during the election campaign) was labelled as 'old-fashioned' (Campbell, 1993a: 38) and belonging to the FPP era.

### **B. Unity concern: tendency to dominate**

The second problem regarding his leadership style that Moore had to deal with was his tendency to dominate and alienate people, which was regarded by his opponents as a threat to party (and, more specifically caucus) unity. James described: '... an arrogant Moore who knows it all, who has brought the management of policy and campaigning largely into his own office under his idiosyncratic personal jurisdiction and who infuriates people by talking down to them, cutting them out of the action or riding over them' (James, 1993e: 165).

Another aspect of his dominant leadership style that Moore had to monitor closely was his inclination to be 'exclusive' - categorising people with whom he worked

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was a rapidly changing situation during that evening; depended on how updated we were with certain bits of news, or how we thought about what the outcome was going to be. And also, I think, it was not unnatural to think that the Alliance wouldn't rush quite so quickly to shore-up the National Government as it did on the night of the next day' (Cullen, interview, 1998).

closely into the 'in-group' and treating 'out-group' differently. This behaviour appeared to be linked to Moore's dispositions that was described by James in the following terms:

... there is also the humble, ready-to-blush, childlike, unsure and uncertain Moore, a quality which can spill over into something approaching an inferiority complex that critics have to handle carefully lest he sees plots and putdowns (James, 1993e: 165).

Whether it was his inferiority complex or not, Moore was certainly conscious of his lack of formal education. He confessed in 1991, 'I would be a better person if I knew law. If I'd done a degree, my job would be easier. I have to work harder because I don't have that training. If I'd had a decent degree it would still have taken me all this time to [become the leader] but I could have done more' (McLoughlin, 1991: 48). This consciousness occasionally manifested itself in his attitude towards others. Caygill looks back at his experience:

He would show that blind spot, if you like, in his relationship and reaction to officials. He'd throw off at officials sometimes. With some of them... to their face. Often behind their backs. For example, he would talk about diplomats as if they were all well-educated - as most are - almost as though he had a sensitivity about his own lack of education. You can understand why he might. But I think that it is more than just a blind spot or sensitivity and almost a weakness in his character that he feels uncomfortable dealing with people who are rational. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

Did Moore treat his 'rational' colleagues in a similar manner? 'Yes, absolutely. I see it in his attitude to me, his attitude to Helen... [and in] the way he would react to some debates'<sup>177</sup> (Caygill, interview, 1996).

Moore himself acknowledges that there was a problem. 'I was accused of being a dictator and trying to dominate and bully them... well, it's a bit true. I did try to bully them, you know' (Moore, interview, 1998).

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<sup>177</sup> Interestingly, two of Labour's 'intellectuals', Michael Cullen (who was a former history senior lecturer with a Ph.D.) and Steve Maharey (who was a former sociology senior lecturer) deny that Moore treated them with suspicion. Cullen attests that he enjoyed a good working relationship with the former leader, adding: 'I've always respected Mike's insights and intellect' (Cullen, interview, 1998). Maharey says: 'Dismiss people with education? I don't know. I've never felt that problem. I think he often felt that people like me who had formal qualifications and came out of university should have come up with more than we did, you know: "Why am I an ideas person, you've got formal qualifications ... How come you don't come up with more?"' (Maharey, interview, 1998) A key to an understanding of this puzzle seems to be 'trust'. The difference between, say, Clark and Cullen was the absence or presence of trust between them and Moore. Moore seemed to have problems with people who disagreed with, and consequently distrusted him (this point will be discussed shortly). 'Rational' people tended to find themselves in Moore's 'out-group' not because of their rationality, but because they were more likely to question his behaviour and judgement, which could be seen as threat to his self-confidence. As discussed in the next chapter, the 'in-group' people who enjoyed Moore's trust were mostly those who were directly employed by (thus less likely to challenge) him.

During his leadership, Moore attempted to counter these problems through 'winning people's affection, winning in the opinion polls, and driving them ahead with ideas' (Moore, interview, 1998). For 'winning affection', Moore stressed his leadership style as being 'inclusive', especially in terms of policy formulation (Harris, 1993a). Moore said: 'You cannot expect people to be loyal to decisions they had no part in making' (Herbert, 1993a). Also, as a prolific reader of books<sup>178</sup> on management, he had clear ideas as to what constitutes good leadership:

It's about coaching, about getting the best out of people, about getting the average to feel good about themselves, about selecting the right people for the right jobs... management in opposition is about morale. (McLoughlin, 1991)

True leadership is not about the belligerent imposition of fixed views but extending solutions so that the people are involved and committed to the result (Moore, 1993a: 53)

You cannot conscript the people. You must inspire and enlist them. (Moore, 1993a: 192)

In practice, between 1990 and 1993 Moore arranged weekly meetings for consultation with caucus members including the new intake. He also boldly allocated significantly important responsibilities to the seven new caucus members (see Chapter 3). Looking back, Moore insists that new MPs had never been treated in such a manner. In addition, he ensured that each new member be allocated question time in parliamentary debate (Moore, interview, 1998).

Lange attests that Moore was successful as an 'inclusive' leader during 'the bulk of the time' between 1990 and 1993: 'He always tries to be inclusive'<sup>179</sup>. And he's often rejected because of that you know. But you could never criticise him for being some sort of distant person. He is a very inclusive operator' (Lange, interview, 1996). Austin agrees, 'he was always consultative' (Austin, interview, 1996). Judith Tizard remembers, as a new MP, when she was asked by Moore directly: 'What will you judge my leadership by?' To which she answered: 'I'll judge you by how you treat your friends and enemies in the caucus, and what shape we're in after the next election' (Tizard, interview, 1998). The leader was obviously eager to be judged well.

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<sup>178</sup> Moore once boasted in an interview that he privately owned 'one of the great libraries on earth'. In the same interview, he also stated: 'I read everyday. I would chew up a couple of books a week, easy, and if I'm going away for a long weekend I'll take five or six books. I read both to be informed and for entertainment' (McMillan, 1993: 66). However, one journalist questioned how much information the former leader actually absorbs from the reading. 'His intellectual hunger and passion for trading ideas is boundless. What he flings back out, eyes blazing, veers between rare insight and incomprehensible babble. At times he seems only to have retained slogans from his reading, skittering across the surface' (Laugesen, 1993a)

<sup>179</sup> Moore's effort was not universally recognised though. When asked about his trying to be inclusive, one MP says: 'Yeah? Oh, that's interesting. I failed to notice it' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

...sometimes, you know, particularly that first year, you'd come into your office and there might be a note saying: 'Where the hell are you? You know, 'I came to visit...regards, Mike'. So he was making an effort to keep in touch with those of us. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

In the debating chamber, he was often seen personally congratulating his colleagues after good speeches or sharing jokes with backbenchers. He also won praise from other MPs for successfully motivating his fellow members (Laugesen, 1993a). In September 1992, Moore boasted of what had been achieved in the PLP under his leadership: 'We are now truly inclusive and consensus building in the way we do things' (NZLP, 1992a: 102).

Moore's personal staff also praise his leadership style. Clayton Cosgrove, for example, says:

The thing you've got to understand is a lot of those people who were employed by Mike became close friends because that was just the nature of the man. ... Most of the people who work with him like him. He is a person who treats his staff and those around him - caucus colleagues - very well<sup>180</sup>. (Cosgrove, interview, 1996).

A political journalist also acknowledged that Moore had a soft side: 'This Moore is effusive, tactile, as if craving warmth and affection, certainly offering it'<sup>181</sup> (James, 1993e: 164).

However, he did not over-alleviate his dominant tendency by being 'inclusive'. Or, perhaps more accurately, he did not see the necessity to do so. As a leader, there was a limit to how 'inclusive' one should be. He talked about prime ministership, to which he was clearly aspiring: 'Prime Ministers have to know what they want and be prepared to trust their own judgement'. He continued:

I find it tragic to watch people I admire - all sorts of people from all parties - who change; who no longer trust themselves and have to seek consultants on every little issue. They weren't elected because of their consultants but because of their general views of life. (McMillan, 1993: 23)

Lange says:

He's a sort of Saddam Hussein of NZ politics in the sense that 'This is what I want to do.' And I mean that's an admirable feature, he's not a namby pamby

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<sup>180</sup> Cosgrove's loyalty and commitment to Moore became evident once again in his involvement in discussions about setting up a break-away 'centre' political party around the former Labour leader in 1995 (Laws, 1998: 289).

<sup>181</sup> Even some strong Clark supporters agree that Moore could be generous and personally supportive. Judith Tizard recalls her experience during the election campaign. 'I was diagnosed as having a major cancer in June 93, and had an operation, major operation a month later. Mike was very kind personally. He gave us very useful advice about how to deal with the media and political aspects of being seriously ill. Of course, he had been through similar himself. And obviously, he regretted the way he had dealt with it at the time. And I mean, I was very grateful for that, and [he] said: "Take whatever time you need".' (Tizard, interview, 1998)

'giving in' fellow. He decides what he'd like. And he therefore is of the old school of politics. He is the 'first past the post' where if you win you dance on someone else's body; and you don't give them the kiss of life you give them the kiss of death. That's what Mike is, the old Labour politician. (Lange, interview, 1996)

The knowledge of what he wanted and the trust in his own judgement often made him impatient. One Labour MP reportedly said, '[h]e'll have an idea and want it implemented immediately with no analysis of it' (Laugesen, 1993f). Moore's loyal supporter and personal friend, Geoff Braybrooke, acknowledges that this caused a problem for some. '[Does he] antagonise people? Of course he does. Because they don't always go with what he thinks is right' (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). Caygill is one MP who found him in such a light, 'He would issue orders... he would be "peremptory" would issue commands' (Caygill, interview, 1996). Tizard agrees:

And I feel that he didn't allow other people to actually say what they were thinking. He often assumed that he knew what your views were. He's not a terribly good consulter, not a very good listener actually. And that's a huge problem. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

When he was presented with opposing views, Moore did not react well, either.

[H]e would literally turn away often if he disagreed with you. He just..., you know, he loved swinging chairs... If he disagreed with you, he'd turn around like that. And you'd still be talking. And you know, you just [think there is] no point in saying whatever it was. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Ruth Dyson has a similar view.

He's quite aggressive in the way he responds. He's quite insulting to people who had different views. And I don't think that's a constructive way for a leader to operate. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

This kind of belief and behaviour inevitably led to personality clashes with those with whom he needed to work closely. As already noted, his relationship with party officials such as Dyson and Timms collapsed. Similarly, his relationship with some of his Parliamentary colleagues including Clark deteriorated severely. Moore's distrust in those people who expressed opposition against him and his views steadily grew.

Moore must have known that he needed to be careful. He himself acknowledged: 'There's a fine line between leadership and bullying, being decisive and being arrogant' (Moore, 1993a). This is another illustration of his paradoxical character.

#### The 1993 Election and Moore's behavioural change

The 1993 election and the real prospect of winning it brought Moore to a crucial turning point. Once the election was in sight, his behaviour started to change and his suppressed dominant tendency began to resurface more frequently. Lange comments,



'about, I would say, halfway through 1993 we suddenly started to see the rise of the personality cult ... and then you saw the exclusive Mike' (Lange, interview, 1996).

What brought about this sudden change? According to Lange, it was his 'recklessness and driving ambition. Mike really wanted to be PM again. He came really close to being a PM again (Lange, interview, 1996)'. Strongly rebutting Lange's view, Moore provides another explanation. He claims that he had to abandon the inclusive approach because some caucus MPs were deliberately trying to undermine his leadership.

...the caucus met on the Thursday, and they [his critics] would meet on Wednesday night... frequently in David Lange's office and they would work out next day how to unnerve me at the caucus meeting, points of order, difficult subjects, leaking... leaking all the time. Anything, any papers that went into caucus went to the newspapers. And it became a nightmare, and some of them, while I was speaking in Parliament, would start rustling paper, pretending they were asleep, yawning, just to make life difficult. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Another factor which induced his behavioural change was his deteriorating relationship with the party officials, which has been already noted. With his leadership solely dependent on winning the election and having no trust in their willingness in assisting him to achieve it, Moore opted to run a highly personalised campaign, assisted by the MMSC. For example, in *Fighting for New Zealand* (which was published prior to the election), he talked about Labour's election campaign as if it had been his personal project: '*Mine* is not just a campaign. It is a crusade, and a mission for a better future for New Zealand and New Zealanders' (Moore, 1993a: 16, emphasis added).

Backed up by the high rating of his personal popularity, Moore utilised himself fully, by letting himself and his photogenic wife, Yvonne, feature widely in the campaign materials<sup>182</sup>. For example, Labour's campaign billboards was described as 'bearing his face, his name and nothing else' (Armstrong, 1993a). Similarly, Labour's television campaign opened with tributes to him, in which Moore himself, his caucus colleagues and his wife discussed his character (Laugesen, 1993c). The party's full-page advertisements in newspapers also focused exclusively on the leader (Levine and Roberts, 1994b: 47).

The campaign's strong emphasis on the leader drew some sharp criticisms from his opponents. For instance, immediately after the election, Lange wrote in *The Dominion*:

The Labour campaign was a remarkable, and unprecedented, projection of personality. The character of Mike Moore was marketed in a way which was calculated to make the history, traditions and policy of the party the property of the leader. (Lange, 1993a)

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<sup>182</sup> His campaign strategy has been said to be heavily influenced by American President, Bill Clinton's 1992 election campaign. Caygill says, 'Mike has always in my view been heavily influenced by American types of campaign. He reads a lot about American politics... Mike has been influenced by them and was in the 1993 campaign' (Caygill, interview, 1996).

Moore strongly denies such a criticism, describing it as 'exactly opposite' (Moore, 2000).

See, you say that. How's that? Is that true? It's no more true than it has been in any other campaign. In fact, less true. We made us... a lot of our publications, I put Helen Clark in there, I put Michael Cullen in there. We went in there as a team. There was a less focus on me than there was [on] David Lange. I mean he even attacked me for saying that my photograph was on the manifesto, as if that had never happened before, Bill Rowling was on the manifesto, so that's happened frequently before... Have you seen those booklets we put out - the larger ones with a window cut in them [see NZLP, 1993b]? Everybody's face was in them. That's never happened before. (Moore, interview, 1998)

However, in the following comments he appears to admit that the criticism had a point.

In fact, the poll... one of the reasons that I didn't do it [was] because the polls showed I was strong, and they were weak. The polling showed that as Leader I was strong, but as a team we looked weak. I tried to build a team in the campaign. I don't think that is technically possible. (Moore, interview, 1998)

As Moore noted above, the 'presidential' style of campaigning with emphasis on party leaders was not so uncommon in New Zealand. Many MPs and party officials indeed accepted such a need. Yet, to what extent Moore should dominate the campaign became controversial. Street looks back at the campaign and comments:

At that point, I have always conceded that there is an element of the campaign that must be presidential. There is a focus on the leader. It is a feature of New Zealand campaigns - and not just New Zealand ones. But the New Zealand electorate does seem to require a leader to embody the things that they are looking for. And so, the personality of the leader is always going to be an element in an election campaign. And so, I didn't object to that in principle. But the *degree* to which it happened in that 93 election was almost obscene. You know the full colour pictures of Yvonne and Mike in the Herald cost us hundreds and thousands of dollars. And the stuff was so focused on Mike and so completely obliterating of Labour that it was really agitating party members. (Street, interview, 1998)

The election campaign strategy was not the only area where the leader came under criticism. Moore's behaviour during the campaign became 'exclusive' in other respects, too. For example, Tizard noticed that he became 'increasingly dismissive of other people's views' (Tizard, interview, 1998). Street says that his financial leverage as the main provider of the campaign finance (through the MMSC) made his power and influence more formidable than other PLP leaders, and he was certainly willing to exercise them to 'have his own way' (Street, interview, 1998).

... He was really hard to work with because he would over-ride things and make unilateral decisions, and then just shout until everybody said: 'Oh, yeah, all right, then do it', you know. So the decision making process... was far from exemplary. (Street, interview, 1998)

Under the increasing pressure, the distinction between his 'in-group' and 'out-group' became clearer and clearer. Street says that there were a group of 'utter devotees' and others 'who were not so devoted [to him], and the leader treated the latter 'with suspicion' (Street, interview, 1998). Moore openly admits that that was the case for some of his colleagues. 'There is a bit of truth in that [claim]. There were one or two I didn't trust, one or two I didn't think were very good, didn't have anything to offer' (Moore, interview, 1998). The 'in-group' which mainly consisted of his personal staff (and a few MPs), continued to increase its importance to the leader. Caygill notes:

He... surrounded himself with a small group of people of advisers and assistants who he worked with, as if he trusted only that group and not others outside that group. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

The core of Moore's personal staff including Clayton Cosgrove, Murray Wansbrough and Barry Ebert were referred to as 'the Beagle Boys' by disgruntled party members (Harris, 1993b). They were Moore loyalists, shared his 'vision'<sup>183</sup> (Cosgrove, interview, 1996). Their behaviour, that was described as similar to Moore's (Blincoe, interview, 1997), antagonised the 'out-group'. Caygill contends, 'somehow some of the people he surrounded himself with were - Clayton Cosgrove was one of his aides - ... treated by other people as though [they] were entitled to express the leader's personal wish' (Caygill, interview, 1996). To people like Lange, selecting those people and allowing them such autonomy was seen as a sign of poor leadership.

[He selected] The ones he agrees with. Mike has a very interesting range of contacts. And he sensibly does not keep a relationship with those who disagree with him. One of the hard things about being a leader is that you ought to assemble different pieces of advice and select the best. Mike tends to assemble the advice that people think he would like. (Lange, interview, 1996)

Another Moore opponent holds a similar view. S/he believes that by surrounding himself with sycophants, he unwittingly helped his own demise. Referring to Moore's earlier mentioned lack of discipline, s/he says:

... I'm not saying that he couldn't be disciplined, but just that he never surrounded himself with people who could do that. Because the way you get discipline is by being challenged professionally or intellectually all the time, you know. And if you surround yourself with people who just go, 'Yes Mike, yes Mike, yes Mike', you are not going to achieve that. So... it's a shame, really. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

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<sup>183</sup> Street argues that their connection to the leader was 'emotional' rather than 'born out of a commitment to principle'. She doubts their loyalty to the Labour Party, but is absolutely sure about their loyalty to Moore. (Street, interview, 1998)

The feeling of isolation and exclusion was also acutely felt amongst women whose prominence had been steadily increasing within the party<sup>184</sup>. The problem between Moore and women was not new. For example, in 1986, Helen Clark described Moore as someone who 'can't help appearing sexist' (Myers, 1986: 166). Maryan Street asserts that his 'sexist' view was reflected in his selection of his 'in-group' as well.

But those men, and they were all men, there were never any women in the circle around Mike, and I think that is important. He had to work with me, and he had to work with Helen. Helen was his deputy... I think he's always had a bit of a problem with powerful or influential, or strong women. I think that is an enduring problem area for him. (Street, interview, 1998)

Judith Tizard agrees. She also believes that his difficulty with women affected his dealing with his deputy as well.

I don't think he is entirely comfortable with women and his office reflected that. I think he tried to work quite carefully with Helen, but I don't think, for example, he ever used her skills particularly well. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

To long-time Moore critics, Moore's changed behaviour did not come as a surprise, as Caygill comments: '... the more exclusive, even manic behaviour he did exhibit during the campaign was not much of a surprise' (Caygill, interview, 1996). To them, his behaviour during the election campaign was a mere manifestation of his true characteristics which they had known and Moore had tried to control. It simply reconfirmed the negative views held against him from the outset of his leadership<sup>185</sup>.

More importantly, as his dominant tendency was displayed publicly during the campaign, those who previously had not been concerned about (or aware of) this shortcoming of his now could recognise it as a serious problem. As is to be seen in the next chapter, these 'new finders' included the new MPs whose opinions ultimately sealed Moore's fate.

## MMP

Like the policy concern, the introduction of MMP weakened Moore's position in relation to the unity concern on two fronts. Firstly, as almost half of the MPs were to be selected through party lists which were compiled by each political party, leaders' ability to sustain good relationships with their own parties was seen as more vital than ever. Not surprisingly, Moore's acrimonious relationship with the party officials was seen as

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<sup>184</sup> With regard to female representation in the PLP, see McLeay (1993).

<sup>185</sup> Some even questioned how seriously Moore hoped to restrain his dominant tendency in the first place. Tizard attests that after being asked about her leadership judging criteria, she was never again approached by Moore on how he was performing according to those criteria. Although she occasionally offered him some comments, Moore showed interest only in 'gossip' or 'things that gave him power' (Tizard, interview, 1998).

posing a potential problem in this area. Even the former leader himself acknowledged this in his opposition to the new electoral system prior to the referendum. Being acutely aware that he was offside with the party officials and thus future candidates selected by them would likely to be against him, he argued: 'I fear the power of the party system if there are lists and not electorates'. 'The clear message is look after the party bosses, they will have the power to lift placings on the lists' (Moore, 1993a: 86).

Secondly, and more importantly, it was generally considered that under MMP leaders had to have skills/abilities to negotiate with other political parties in order to form a coalition government or achieve some form of co-operation, as no single party was likely to secure the majority. The trouble for Moore was, amongst political parties available, the most likely future partner of Labour was the Alliance, with whose leader he had had a strained relationship. A political journalist, Gordon Campbell wrote shortly after the 1993 leadership change: 'The legacy of his [Moore's] personal antagonism to [Jim] Anderton now makes co-operation that will be essential under MMP quite difficult' (Campbell, 1993a: 38-39)<sup>186</sup>.

### **The impact of failing to resolve the concerns**

How did Moore's failure to alleviate the concerns over his leadership affect his support composition? Its effect can be found at least in two areas. Firstly, it convinced a small number of moderate/right caucus members - most notably Caygill - who were in line with Moore policy-wise that a leadership change was necessary on the ground of his unsuitable leadership style. Secondly, it strengthened the resolve of the caucus left who were already opposing him for his policy stances. The level of personal animosity towards Moore within the party after the election was palpable.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the expectations of and concerns about Moore's leadership in the caucus during the period of 1990-1993. Upon returning to Parliament after the devastating 1990 election, the leader was fully aware that retention of his leadership would depend upon meeting those expectations and eradicating the concerns. The

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<sup>186</sup> The change to the new electoral system certainly played a part in the 1993 leadership change by underlining Moore's problems as the leader and accentuating Clark's contrasting competence (see Chapter 5). However, one ought not to over-exaggerate the importance of this variable. In other words, it merely *hastened* the already moving process. The anti-Moore group were already convinced that Moore should be replaced, *regardless* of the outcome of the referendum. Asked whether Moore could have survived if the FPP system had been retained, Dyson replies: '[P]eople had major concerns about him as leader under the First-Past-the-Post system. So, I think regardless he would have gone. But I think the fact that we were moving into a new environment just highlighted those concerns... So, [his leadership style was] not a good way to operate under First-Past-the-Post, but it's even worse under MMP' (Dyson, interview, 1998). Also see Chapter 5.

analysis of this chapter has revealed that despite his early success, Moore increasingly struggled at both tasks as time passed. In response, discontent with his leadership in the caucus gradually yet steadily grew. Under these circumstances, the imperativeness of fulfilling the expectation of winning the 1993 election for his survival increased.

So, how did Moore's performance at the two tasks affect his support composition in 1993? Did the MPs align at the 1993 leadership vote in the way the propositions would suggest? These questions, amongst others, will be addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### The vulnerability of the Moore leadership

#### **Introduction**

Moore failed to either meet his opponents' expectations or eradicate his opponents' concerns during the 1990-1993 period. Could his performance in these regards explain the collapse of his leadership, as suggested in Chapter 2? This second part of the analysis of the Moore leadership examines the validity of the propositions of this study more closely against the findings. At the same time, an attempt will be made to identify/analyse the variables which affected Moore's leadership demise.

Moore's 1993 support composition at the time of the leadership vote on 1 December provides an obvious starting point for the validity analysis.

#### **Moore's 1993 support composition**

On 1 December 1993, Moore's support composition appears to have been as follows:

Loyalists:	Braybrooke, Elder, Hawkins, Moore, Robertson, Tapsell, Tirikatene-Sullivan
Uncommitted supporters:	Austin, Cullen, Dunne, Duynhoven, Goff, Keall, King, Matthewson, O'Connor, Sutton, Tennet, Wetere
Opponents	Blincoe, Barker, Burton, Carter, Caygill, Clark, Dalziel, Dyson, Field, Gallagher, Hodgson, Hunt, Kelly, Lange, MacKey, Maharey, Mallard, Northey, Peck, Pettis, Sinclair, Sutherland, Swain, Tizard, White, Yates

#### **Characteristics of the 1993 Moore support composition**

Moore's opponents now outnumbered his supporters (the sum of the loyalists plus the uncommitted supporters) by seven. In comparison to the 1990 initial support composition, three points are clear. Firstly, nine 1990 uncommitted supporters had switched to become the opponents. They were: Blincoe, Clark, Dalziel, Hodgson, Hunt, Maharey, Sutherland, Swain, and Tizard. This result contains no surprise considering Moore's failure to meet the expectations and appease the concerns. The second point is probably less expected than the first. Despite Moore's failure at the two tasks, twelve supporters (excluding Moore himself) stayed with him. Thirdly, a clear voting pattern was observed among MPs' 'classes'; Moore derived his support mainly from the MPs who first entered Parliament before 1990, while the majority of Clark supporters won

their first seats after 1990. All the 1990 and 1993 new intake, except for one from each class (Hawkins and O'Connor) voted for Clark.

Each of these three points raises a further question, which are vital to a comprehensive understanding of the 1993 leadership change. They are:

**The Moore opponents:**

- Why and how Clark became 'the' alternative leader among the growing Moore opponents?
- Did the 1993 new intake who had to choose their leader after being in Parliament less than two months possess sufficient knowledge of the two contenders to make a sound judgement? If so, how did they accumulate it?

**The Moore supporters:**

- Why did the twelve MPs continue to support him? Why did his failure to achieve the two tasks not affect their stance?

This study now examines these points.

**Moore opponents**

**How did Clark emerge as the alternative leader?**

It has already become clear that the number of the Moore opponents within the caucus steadily increased as a direct result of his leadership performance. However, the dissatisfaction with his leadership alone cannot fully explain Moore's demise. What is required to gain a total picture of Moore's downfall is the emergence of Clark as the alternative leader, as no leadership change can occur without someone to replace the incumbent.

It appears that the dissatisfaction with Moore's performance in terms of meeting the expectations and especially resolving the concerns not only decreased his support within the caucus, but also strengthened the standing of Clark, who had a very different operational style and disposition (as outlined in Chapter 1). Such striking contrast no doubt worked in favour of Clark, who was already a potential successor of Moore through her No.2 position in the caucus<sup>187</sup>. When the anti-Moore group looked for an alternative to replace him, the qualities which they sought were abilities to solve (or avoid) the problems associated with his leadership. As those problems were largely attributed to his personality and his operational style, they naturally found an ideal candidate in Clark, who was as different from the troubled leader as anyone could hope for. With regard to Moore's erratic tendency, his deputy was seen as much more predictable and reliable. In a recent interview, Clark herself said: 'You don't get unpredictable things from me, I'm very predictable' (Main, 1998b).

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<sup>187</sup> For instance, Judith Tizard says: 'Helen, who had been Deputy twice...obviously saw herself as the next leader. So she was the natural person to whom those who were dissatisfied with Mike would come to' (Tizard, interview, 1998).



In terms of the dominance problem, Clark was also viewed favourably. Her supporters' general perception in this respect was that she would make a consensus seeking, inclusive leader.

[W]e were looking for a person who could give us really sound policies, who could run a government, not run an opposition, who could run a government, and who could include everyone in the team so we didn't have to have the sort of 'half the caucus left out and half the caucus feeling like they knew everything' feeling. And even though Helen was clearly identified with the left of the party, she's got amazing inclusive skills. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

As a candidate for the deputy's position, Caygill 'felt that I could work well with Helen', a confidence which he never had with Moore. Thus, 'I had encouraged [Clark] to think of challenging Mike for the leadership by talking with her about that even before the 1993 election. I said to her that if she did, she would have my support' (Caygill, interview, 1996). Some of the reasons which Northey lists for supporting Clark also resonate this view.

She was able to recognise and value her colleagues for the worth of their ideas and their work, whether they were on the party's left or right, men or women, Maori or Pakeha.

She knew the Party and how it should rule well from her experience as a New Zealand Councillor at the Party and a broad range of roles in it.

She was intelligent, sensitive and reliable. (Northey 1998a)

Clark was also believed to perform significantly better where Moore failed in terms of his given expectations. In relation to restoring the relationship between the EPLP and PLP, Clark had enjoyed a long and trusting relationship with the EPLP. As a former President notes: 'Helen was really well respected in the party. I mean, anyone who has worked with her always has had respect for ability and the level of work that she puts into things' (Dyson, interview, 1998). Even after becoming an MP, unlike many of her colleagues, she remained firmly convinced that the PLP should be responsible to the EPLP. The party's trust in her is most evident in her success in remaining as the only MP Party Executive through the turbulent fourth Labour Government years until 1989 (with a break in 1988) (McCallum, 1993: 149). Based on this proven track record, Clark's attitude towards the EPLP and party policy was believed to be markedly different from Moore. Clark was fully aware of that: 'I was never thought of by the party as someone who thought the manifesto was for the dustbin' (McCallum, 1993: 153).

The then deputy leader was also more critical of and thus keener to depart from Rogernomics (Caygill, interview, 1998) and (less importantly) had a more liberal stance on moral issues than Moore. Although she was a Cabinet Minister in the fourth Labour Government, unlike Moore, she was not appointed to the position until 1987. Together

with her social policy related Ministerial positions, her reputation was hardly tainted by her association with the 1984-1990 Government<sup>188</sup>. As Sutherland puts it,

... I think the feeling was that we have to finally shed the remnants and connection with the Roger Douglas and Richard Prebble era, and that the only way to do that... - and this is not my position, I'm just talking to you from people who were supporting Clark - was that... she was the only one who was capable of sort of... taking over the leadership and allowing that sort of thing to happen. (Sutherland, interview, 1998).

Clark herself acknowledged this necessity upon her election: 'What I want is a strong, clearly identifiable social democratic, centre-left party which articulates what it stands for without equivocation' (Clifton, 1993b)

Also, as a stricter observer of the rules than Moore, she was expected to follow the formal policy making procedure. In addition, once policies were made, she was also believed to represent them more faithfully. For instance, Street asserts that she expected that under the new leadership, the party's formal policy making process and agreed policies would be more respected as she could bring a 'more intelligent approach to policy and more consistent approach to policy' (Street, interview, 1998). Northey concurs: 'She had a consistent, logical, principled, coherent approach to policy formation and decision making in the Party' (Northey, 1998a).

#### The role of the 1993 referendum

In the previous chapter, it was indicated that the arrival of MMP intensified the concerns over Moore's leadership style, making his position more untenable. The three essential leadership skills/abilities which he was perceived to be lacking were those of: a) presenting clearly distinguishable policies; and b) working harmoniously with the EPLP (especially in terms of party list making); and c) establishing/maintaining constructive working relationships with other political parties in view of forming a future coalition.

The same new electoral system was also a contributory factor to Clark's emergence as the alternative, highlighting her claimed positive attributes, and helping strengthen her case. In contrast to Moore, Clark being better equipped with the three required skills meant that her supporters could promote the alternative leader more vigorously<sup>189</sup>.

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<sup>188</sup> In an interview, Clark said that she believed that she was elected into the Cabinet in 1987 because the party needed somebody to keep deregulatory policies away from the social policy area. (McCallum, 1993: 151). In another interview, she explained that her first Cabinet post as the Housing Minister was allocated by the then Prime Minister, Lange, because he saw her 'as a block to the New Right approach' (Baysting et al., 1993: 86)

<sup>189</sup> This was despite Clark being an open and strong opponent of MMP. However, her reason for opposing the new system were different from that of Moore, which was his distrust of the party hierarchy (see Chapter 4). She argued that the proposed system would be unlikely to produce a party with a majority. Under such circumstances, she contended, too much power would be given to minor parties, which in turn would make honouring a manifesto considerably difficult (H. Clark, 1993).

On the policy front, for example, Maharey prepared a letter to his constituents in which he delineated his reasons for supporting Clark, that read:

The arrival of MMP meant that the party needed a leader who could clearly set out Labour's position.

Under MMP ... some things are very important.

1. Parties will need to have a very clearly stated position.
2. They will need to attract support rather than rely on voter dislike of the current government.
3. Parties will need to ensure they have an attractive team of people to put to the electorate.

My support for Helen is based on my belief that she is a Leader whose time has come. (Maharey, 1993)

Dyson comments on this point as follows:

[M]y view is... that that [fudging issues] just gets you into more trouble. You end up satisfying no-one because one group's going to be disappointed... however they interpreted it, and it is much better to be really up-front about what you're going to do, and explain it very clearly, so that the people can make an informed choice... [T]hat is the key difference between how Helen operates and the way Mike operates... (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Clark herself linked her candidacy to the new political environment induced by MMP. The day before the leadership vote, she explained that MMP 'has a very substantial amount to do with' her challenge against Moore. With regard to the need for clearer policies, the challenger said:

In the future, Labour can no longer rely on an appeal to the electorate that says: 'Well, we are not as bad as they are'. Under MMP, people can vote for whoever they like, and expect to get representation in Parliament for that. And that means that Labour must position itself in the political scene with a clear political programme to attract votes in its own right. (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 30 November 1993)

On the second front – skills and abilities to work constructively with the party officials – Clark's credentials were impeccable. As already noted, she had always maintained close and friendly relationships with the party officials even during the difficult 1984-1990 period. The trust that the party officials placed in her was almost absolute.

With regard to her abilities/skills in the third area, shortly after the coup, Caygill wrote a newspaper article explaining the complexity of job demands on the leadership under MMP. Then he went on to justify the change of the leadership in this context, praising Clark as a person with the necessary abilities to respond to such demands competently:

... Firstly, of course, the leader needs to be able to command the support of a majority of caucus members. The caucus's concerns necessarily focus on matters of internal management. But the ability to present policy effectively - to lead, in short - is also crucial. On the other hand, this new environment requires a leader able to work harmoniously with other political interests.

To be conciliatory while differentiating our political product will not be easy. I believe Helen Clark has the necessary mix of attributes in large measure. (Caygill, 1993)

He concluded that to meet the challenges presented by the new electoral system, leaders need 'bold, intelligent, disciplined leadership' which 'Labour (now) offers' (Caygill, 1993). Street is more blunt in her analysis:

All parties compete with each other for a share of the vote under MMP, but you needed to have people who could negotiate with those competitors after the event in order to establish a coalition government. In the view of many of us, Mike Moore was not that person... So, he was defeated in favour of Helen. (Street, interview, 1998)

While there was little doubt that Clark and her supporters took full advantage of the new electoral system, it is important to stress MMP's role as merely a contributory factor. After all, Clark herself was an open and strong opponent of MMP (H. Clark, 1993). Because of this, some privately expressed their concerns about Clark's capability of making a smooth transition to it (Dyson, interview, 1998).

### **The 1993 intake**

Another determining factor in sealing Moore's fate was the 1993 new intake, who overwhelmingly supported Clark. Although Moore's support eroded during the 1990-1993 period, within the remaining MPs from this group after the 1993 election (25 of them) he still maintained a majority support of 13 against Clark's 12. In other words, Clark's challenge would not have been successful without the 1993 new intake. It is noteworthy that everybody in this group except for one (O'Connor) voted for Clark whereas a majority (five out of seven) of the returning former MPs, who lost their seats in 1990, supported Moore. Because the new intake's disproportionate preference for Clark, the Moore camp claimed that there must have been a deliberate bias in the selection process. For example, the former leader himself attributed his loss of the top position to this factor in a TV interview in 1996:

I lost the leadership of the Labour Party well before the election. I lost the leadership of the Labour Party after the selection was made. On the eve of the selections '[if] you [were] the candidate for X or Y seat', they were asked by the President who they would support as the leader, Mike Moore or Helen Clark.<sup>190</sup> (Assignment, 20 June 1996, TV1, 7:30pm)

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<sup>190</sup> Whether such a question was asked to potential candidates and whether the selections were made based on their replies was a subject of dispute. Austin, a Moore supporter, denies such claim. Although holding low respect for the then party officials, she shows reservations about Moore's

Moore's claim was not groundless. Under the three previous Presidents (Margaret Wilson, Dyson, and Street), Labour had been selecting candidates to ensure the representation of certain ideological viewpoints. In Colin James' words, they 'quietly refashioned the caucus through selections of people of whom not many were Moore types' (James, 1993b). With regard to the candidate selection for the 1993 election, Sheppard documented that in the 'second phase' of the selection - following the 1992 Party Conference - the chosen candidates were disproportionately from the Unionist/Feminist factions of the party (Sheppard, 1998). So, as Moore argued, was his demise as the leader a forgone conclusion before the election?

To answer this question, it is necessary to examine why and how the 1993 new intake decided to support Clark. The 'hidden agenda' theory suggests, as Moore put it, that '[t]he new members of Parliament had a view before they got here [Parliament] (Kilroy, 1994).' Asked whether there was any bias in the candidate selection for the 1993 election, Maryan Street, the then Senior Vice President of the party<sup>191</sup> replies in a disarmingly honest manner: 'Absolutely. Absolutely. Completely'. However, she quickly adds that the bias was not against Moore himself but it was 'discrimination in favour of people with left-wing politics'<sup>192</sup>. Because of their policy views, they were more likely to oppose Moore who was seen as an integral part of the fourth Labour Government; in other words, the fact that the majority of the 1990 and 1993 candidates voted for the leadership change was merely consequential. Street explains the selections of the 1993 candidates in the following terms.

... we were very careful in the party to select people whose economics we could trust, who were much more explicitly left of centre in their economic policy than we had tested before with people. So we tried to make sure that the past couldn't repeat itself. ... But if there were some residual Rogernomes ['Rogernomics' supporters] in the caucus, then they would be outnumbered. And we were successful in that... We had a much more unified band of people come in in 93 than we had seen previously. (Street, interview, 1998)

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assertion: 'No, I don't think that's true. I don't think that's true. It would have been revealed if that is the case. I think you've got to give the Labour Party some credibility, but I could be wrong but I would doubt if people would be asked that sort of question... and in fact the selections were made in 1992 in the main.' (Austin, interview, 1997)

<sup>191</sup> Asked how deeply she was involved in the 1993 candidate selections, she replies: '... when Ruth Dyson was President, I accompanied her on most selection panels as SVP [Senior Vice President], and certainly on all the contentious ones eg, Onewunga. We had an agenda in mind which was consistent with Margaret Wilson's agenda before us, and we worked at it. So the answer to your question is - very deeply' (Street, 1998).

<sup>192</sup> The pre-1990 intakes were, on the other hand, selected with different criteria. As one MP belonging to this group says: 'Some [MPs] like myself and a number of others in the caucus were selected as candidates at a stage when Labour had grown tired of being in opposition and knew they had to win more votes from the centre. ... [T]hey selected more centrist candidates to stand in electorates, marginal electorates.' (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Both Dyson and Street vehemently deny Moore's accusation that candidates were directly asked about their preferred leader at their selection interviews. For example, Dyson says:

That's just a lie! It's just crap! He knows that's not true... I mean, I didn't ask anyone. It's rubbish. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Even Damien O'Connor doubts if there was such a direct approach, while not completely ruling out such a possibility.

I don't think it would have been that blatant. Maybe with some of the MPs, a small clique, that may have happened. But I think with a majority of the new ones coming in, that probably wasn't the situation. It would have happened far more subtly than that. (O'Connor, interview, 1998)

However, the new intake's almost unanimous support for Clark was undeniable. Maharey describes this group's enthusiasm for the change in the following terms.

The bulk of people who came in in 1993 were not Moore supporters. They were people who were grumbling in the party before they became candidates, and before they won their seats... There were people right through that group who clearly came in saying: 'We are here. We want a change. We've lost the election. We want a change.' (Maharey, interview, 1998)

The amount of knowledge about Moore and Clark which the new intake possessed upon entering Parliament varied depending upon their previous experiences. As Dyson explains,

You know somebody as a party member. Of course you see them at conferences all the time; you see them two or three times a year at major conferences. You get to meet them, hear their presentations. As candidates, you work with the leader and deputy a lot [who] visit your electorate. A number of those people had been on the New Zealand Council, and had seen Mike as the leader. He came to the New Zealand Council occasionally when... they were on the Council. Helen used to be a member of the New Zealand Council. ... So although we haven't worked with them in the position to which we were electing them - and that is a legitimate criticism - I think most of us had some idea about what we wanted out of the leader. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

For veteran party activists like Rick Barker, the two leaders were already familiar. 'Well, I knew Helen quite well. I have known Helen... since the mid 70s, I guess. I've known Mike for a similar period of time. Both were well known to me' (Barker, interview, 1998). For others without a history of party activism, it was the election campaign that presented them with the first real opportunity to know the two figures.

So, why did the 1993 intake decide to oppose Moore? Northey, himself a returning former MP who was controversially selected as a candidate<sup>193</sup>, says that during this period most new candidates formed negative views of the former leader. His following explanation suggests that Moore's dominant tendency and erratic behaviour was responsible for creating his own downfall:

The main reason the new MPs almost unanimously supported Helen Clark was their close experience of Mike Moore before and during the campaign. In particular there was the weekly telephone conference calls involving Mike Moore, party organisers and the non-MP candidates in winnable seats. These conference calls were remarkable in their nature and their impact.

They would begin with a long Moore monologue rave in which he would threaten and attack candidates for not working hard enough, not attracting enough loyal hard working workers for the campaign, in contrast to him, asking each to carry out a long unsystematic and unrealistic list of tasks in the next week or else let the side down, and making an apparently incoherent set of both inspirational and irrational comment about the issues and the campaign. Personal, behind the public scene conversations between candidates and Mike Moore when he visited their electorate to campaign for them, reinforced this unsettling and often disturbing pattern. Either Mike Moore was poorly advised about how to motivate his candidates or else his own analysis, temperament and judgement during this tense period was faulty. The end result of it was to persuade all but one of the candidates that when he failed to win the election, serious consideration should be given to replacing him with someone more appropriate. (Northey, 1998a)

Indeed, through these experiences, new candidates became quickly familiar with the concerns of the Moore opponents in the caucus in a short period of time. For instance, Jill White asserts: 'I just didn't quite see where we might be going with Mike. I found all the different sort of ideas that came out a bit disconcerting'. In the meantime, she found his deputy impressive. White says that she acquired a great respect for Clark's 'power of analysis' and the then deputy leader's approach 'just struck a chord' with her in the way that Moore's approach never did (White, interview, 1998).

Another new MP had more direct contact with Moore in relation to his/her selection as the candidate for the 1993 election. Moore publicly supported another candidate for the selection and tried to exert his influence to secure this candidate's candidacy, which infuriated the MP. His/her negative opinion of Moore further intensified when s/he confronted the leader regarding his action.

I went up to him and told him that he was a leader of a political party, [and that] he had absolutely no right, as the caucus leader to be making public statements about who should win the selection for \*\*\*, which he had done. He denied he had done it. So, I presented him with a transcript and he was... very angry, and he was pretty stressed, and he didn't even accept... he wouldn't speak to me. I signed my death warrant that day for any support from Mike Moore in my selection challenge. I think that was wrong. I think he should have taken it on the chin

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<sup>193</sup> His selection was met with strong opposition from the local electorate. See, for example, 'Party selection anger', *The New Zealand Herald*, 21 December 1992, Sec.1, p.5. and Sheppard (1998), pp.222-224.

[that] I was right. And... it was almost as if I had no right to say that to him. I have every right to say anything I want to say to the caucus colleagues... (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Not surprisingly, by the time the caucus vote was taken on 1 December, s/he had profound concerns about Moore's 'leadership', 'direction and focus'. On the other hand, s/he considered Clark having a leadership style which would allow 'free discussion in caucus' and enable Labour to declare 'what it stood for' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

Moore supporters, however, question the accuracy of the knowledge that the 1993 new intake had accumulated as well as the strength of their commitment to Clark.

Austin points to the hasty manner in which the coup was executed:

...what became apparent... was that they had to move very quickly after the 1993 election because they could not allow new members the luxury of being informed. They had to move quickly before the pressure that these people put on them during the course of the election campaign was undermined by the information coming through from other people. (Austin, interview, 1997)

Moore strongly concurs<sup>194</sup>.

...they never met me. They had never seen me speak in Parliament. What they [the Clark supporters] didn't want to do is give me twelve months in Parliament where I would have convinced them to come my way. They had to move quickly. They'd just won. They had never sat in Parliament... Some of them had never been to a Party conference... they were fearful if I had twelve months to work on them, I might have charmed them. (Moore, interview, 1998)

In fact, some of the 93 intake agree with these views. Mark Peck, who, as a party activist, had known both Moore and Clark for a while, lists several reasons why he supported the leadership change. The first reason was his wish to strengthen Clark's position in the public mind at the crucial beginning of her leadership. Since her win was generally considered a forgone conclusion in the caucus, Peck concluded a greater majority of her victory would help legitimise the new leadership.

I felt that we needed a strong leadership team in the House with support of the bulk of the caucus. It was clear that Mike didn't have the numbers, and that Helen needed strong support. And I was prepared to support her. (Peck, interview, 1998)

Endorsing the obvious winner was not the only reason for Peck supporting Clark. His other reasons included Clark's impressive abilities demonstrated in her performance

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<sup>194</sup> Moore had a very good reason to believe that the things would have been different if he had had more time. He had a similar experience back in 1972, although at the time from the other side of the spectrum as a new MP. Shortly after he was sworn in, the Labour caucus faced the task of selecting a Cabinet for the third Labour Government through votes. Although by the time he had already obtained considerable knowledge about his fellow MPs through party activism, the future Party leader found the selection difficult and open to manipulation, especially for newcomers (Moore, 1993b: 33).



as the party's health spokesperson and Moore's tendency to 'put his mouth into gear before he engages his brain' which was evident in his election night speech. Peck also says that at that time he was basing his judgement heavily on another MP with a trade union background<sup>195</sup>, Graham Kelly - a strong Clark supporter.

Interestingly, Peck is now adamant that if the vote had been taken later, he would have cast his vote differently. What he did not know then was 'the way the caucus worked and who the strategic thinkers within the caucus were'. He continues: '[C]ertainly having the vote as quickly as we did didn't give [us] an opportunity to make those assessments' (Peck, interview, 1998).

Another new intake whose vote could have gone to Moore is Rick Barker. According to him, it was at the caucus meeting on 1 December where his final choice was made.

The thing that made me in the end decide to vote for a change was I felt that Mike in the introduction to the caucus had almost conceded the game in the way in which the thing had evolved. I sat and watched the first few moments. Lange was critical in the process of course. And I thought right from the outset of the meeting that Mike looked like, you know, he was beaten and that he'd thrown the towel in. So, I thought: Well, if I want someone who is going to fight for the leadership, you've got to fight all the way to the line.' (Barker, interview, 1998)

However, how many of the 1993 new intake would have changed their votes if the coup had been executed later is unclear. As is to be seen in Chapters 7 and 8, the majority of this group would later become Clark's loyal supporters. This indicates that the views of those MPs would most certainly have remained the same regardless of the timing. Considering this, it seems that the final outcome of the change would not have been any different under such circumstances.

### **Moore supporters: why did they support him?**

#### **Moore loyalists**

Before answering the above question, it is helpful to analyse Moore's support composition more closely. Perhaps the most noticeable characteristic is its small portion of loyalists. As already mentioned, Moore had the distinctive 'in' and 'out' groups. The majority of his 'in-group' consisted of his personal staff, whom he personally selected, and there were few MPs included. This is apparent in Blincoe's reaction when asked to identify who Moore's loyalist MPs were. After a pause, he replies, 'That's a good question. I don't know whom he regards as rock solid allies, you know, confidantes in that sense. I can't think of anyone you would say: "Just go and talk to X because he has got the ear of Mike"' (Blincoe, interview, 1997). Jack Elder manages to

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<sup>195</sup> Before entering Parliament, Peck was an official with the Hotel and Hospital Workers Union.

name four MPs including himself as 'the more obvious ones': they are Geoff Braybrooke, Ross Robertson, and George Hawkins (Elder, interview, 1998).

What were the reasons for their *positive* support for Moore? In Chapter 2, it is suggested that this type of support is formed because the leader approximates to followers' ideal leadership image, which is based on their understanding of the leader's fundamental characteristics. Was this the case among the 1993 Moore loyalists? Braybrooke's answer clearly indicates his understanding of and profound regard for Moore as a leader and beyond: 'He's a great friend, and I love him as a human being'. He further elaborates on the basis for his *positive* support for the former leader.

I've known him virtually all my political life, and we've been friends of each other's family, so... I've always been a good friend of Mike Moore and he's been a good friend to me. So, it's mainly on friendship more than politics. It's a personal touch rather than the political touch. (Braybrooke, interview, 1998)

Another Moore loyalist, Jack Elder<sup>196</sup>, lists his working-class background and a similar political view are among the reasons for his loyalty to Moore.

Mike is highly intelligent, worked very hard, and he had similar philosophical, philosophic views to me. It's not surprising that I actually got on with him, and agreed with his views, because we came from backgrounds which were a little similar. (Elder, interview, 1998)

Both MPs' accounts display their sound knowledge of Moore which was acquired over a length of time. Also evident is their absolute confidence in him as the leader of the Labour Party with the belief that the interests of the party and its constituents (which Elder calls 'traditional Labour people') would be best represented under his leadership. Naturally, they were far from convinced when Moore's perceived inadequacy to lead the party under the new electoral system (such as the lack of clarity), was suggested by the Clark supporters.

... there they were saying the political parties had to narrow their support and deepen it. Because we would have had a fundamentally different system. And they couldn't understand the fundamental logic of our politics. And the fundamental logic of our politics was that although the Labour Party was going to a... basically proportional system, the fact was that we were still going to win most of our seats in the constituencies, therefore we had to act like a first-past-the-post party. They didn't understand the fundamentals of politics... And that's why they were happy to move with Helen because... they were looking forward to the day when we were talking about niche politics... [Their] lack of... intellectual rigour involved in that just astonished me. I couldn't believe it!... They were going to do exactly the wrong thing, and they could not see it. And the reason was of course they did not want to see it. They wanted to make the Labour Party a niche party<sup>197</sup>. (Elder, interview, 1998)

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<sup>196</sup> After the 1993 leadership change, both Elder and Braybrooke seriously considered leaving Labour with Moore to form a new political party. See Laws (1998), Chapter 10, especially p.287.

<sup>197</sup> Clark flatly denied that it was her intention to narrow the electorate to which the Labour Party would attempt to appeal. The day before the leadership vote, she described such a claim as 'a tactic

Some caution can be helpful before concluding that strong personal faith in Moore was the sole reason for his loyalists' adherence to him. While having unshakeable respect for Moore, they were by no means oblivious to the political advantage in openly supporting the highly popular leader.

...being a politician, you can't help thinking it wouldn't hurt me politically to be seen publicly supporting Mike, no matter whether he would have won, lost or drew. That's why I was very public about my support. (Elder, interview, 1998)

### **Uncommitted supporters**

Apart from this small group of loyalists, the majority of Moore's (1990 and) 1993 supporters consisted of the uncommitted supporters. There was little doubt that they had a better relationship with the leader than most of the Clark supporters did. For example, Margaret Austin attests: 'I got on very, very well with him' (Austin, interview, 1997).

However, it is important not to over-emphasise their personal closeness. In any case, high personal respect for and trust in Moore was not visibly present among this group. Blincoe says: '[e]ven some of those who voted for Mike in the leadership change didn't have great regard for him' (Blincoe, interview, 1997). The Clark supporters' concern about his leadership style was shared by this group. One such MP was Peter Dunne. He later confessed that he cast his vote for Moore 'albeit with considerable reluctance and lack of enthusiasm' (Dunne, 1996). He writes:

I have no regard for Mr Moore's abilities. To be blunt, I think he is flaky, erratic and ill-suited to any leadership role. (Dunne, 1999a)

Dunne is not alone. Caygill remembers the comments made in 1990 by one Moore supporter, on the erratic leader.

He said: 'Being led by Mike Moore would be like sitting in a cardboard box on a motorway. You know you're going to be wiped out. The only thing you don't know is which direction that will come from'. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

So, why exactly did they support Moore, or what prevented them from voting for Clark? There were at least six reasons why those 'unenthusiastic' supporters stood by Moore in 1993. Firstly, unlike the Moore opponents, they thought that Labour had performed well under Moore's leadership, especially at the election. Considering his achievement, they believed, Moore deserved another chance. For example, Phil Goff says:

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which he [Moore] has adopted in this particular phase of his bid to retain the leadership'. She continued: 'I think it's very important that we all concentrate on the issues, on the future of Labour in a totally changed electoral scene, and how we may best play a part to serve this country representing a broad cross section of New Zealanders' (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 30 November 1993).

[I]f you looked at the actual result, you'd say: 'Well, here is the man who's taken a party devastated in the 1990 election back to within striking distance and almost victory in 1993. He deserved a better outcome than what he got and that was certainly my view because I voted for him in the leadership contest in 1993.

He continues:

I thought that by and large the positives of Mike's leadership from 1990 to 1993 outweighed any criticisms that were being made of him. And I believed that he had a greater ability to build on the advances that had been made in those three years to win the 1996 election than did Helen Clark. Mike had a level of determination and motivation that surpasses most people in politics, a willingness to work hard in extraordinary hours. And I believe that he could have achieved more with the strengthened caucus that he had after 1993 than he was possibly able to achieve beforehand with a small demoralised caucus that had lost some of its leading members in the 1990 election. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Annette King also saw Moore's achievement in a mere three years as remarkable.

He did extremely well as the Leader of the Opposition to take us from the biggest defeat we'd ever had to within a hair's breadth of being Government by 1993. I suppose you could say: 'If he was so bad, how did he do that?' (King, interview, 1998)

Secondly, some caucus members felt a personal obligation and loyalty to Moore. For instance, the finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen, admits that there was 'a degree of personal loyalty in that Mike had promoted me as finance spokesperson at the end of 1991<sup>198</sup>. I had no reason to feel that any obligation thus created was no longer in existence' (Cullen, interview, 1998).

This feeling of loyalty was particularly strong among those who returned to Parliament after a three year-break, probably sooner than they originally anticipated. Goff attests: 'I guess there was an element of personal loyalty in there. Mike had worked his guts out in the period leading up to the election; he'd been around the electorates' (Goff, interview, 1998). A similar feeling was expressed regarding the fact that MPs were selected by voters based on the understanding that Moore would be the leader of the Labour Party. Damien O'Connor cites this as his reason.

To me it [the decision to support Moore] was very simple. We had this package that people had voted for. And I knew that my constituents, those who voted for

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<sup>198</sup> The finance spokespersonship could have gone to another MP when David Caygill left the position. Moore explains how Cullen got the nod in the following terms. 'I approached Cullen, [Clive] Matthewson and [Peter] Dunne. I would have taken any of those. I said to them: "You've got a year to prove yourself. Whoever does the work, whoever shows the initiative", and Cullen did. I actually wanted Matthewson, 'because he was clean, good looking guy, but he was lazy. Then I organised trips overseas for seminars for Cullen, you know, to bring him up,... to get him up to speed. I was loyal to him, I worked with him, helped him, probably I would know more about economics than he would,... to get him up to speed. And he got up to speed. He was very good' (Moore, interview, 1998).

me, many did so on the basis that Mike Moore was the leader, and that it was a package. Damien O'Connor was the West Coast MP and Mike Moore was the leader of the party, and they hoped that we would win the election and we could get into power. To turn around and say that: 'I didn't consider he was the right leader', to me, was an insult to those who had voted for me. And... my first priority was... first of all, to show my return of the loyalty that they had shown to me by maintaining my loyalty to the package the voters wished to see put in place. (O'Connor, interview, 1998)

Thirdly, due to the left-wing ideological connotation of the leadership challenge, a few caucus moderate/right members feared that there would be a radical policy shift as well as personnel changes that involved their demotion in terms of caucus responsibilities and rankings. Austin described the coup instigators as those 'who didn't want the Labour Party to have any bar at all of the economic direction which had been set in place from 1984 until 1989. They wanted to take the Labour Party back into an interventionist mode' (Austin, interview, 1997). Peter Dunne echoes Austin's sentiment.

In fact, the only reason that I supported him [Moore] was the 'left/right' split in the caucus, although I had no real confidence that he would be in any way a worthwhile party leader. (Dunne, 1999a)

Some of the former Ministers of the fourth Labour Government express their disagreement with the caucus left's claim that the party should have apologised for the Rogernomics era, although their expressions are not as strong as Austin's.

That those who would have classed themselves as left wing thought that Mike Moore had been a Minister for six years and had been tarnished with the reputation of the fourth Labour Government. I don't share that view as that having being a down side. To the contrary, I think quite differently about it. (Goff, interview, 1998)

This ideological discrepancy was also aggravated by the personality dimension. Austin reports that between the pro-Moore 'middle of the ground group' (in which she includes Matthewson, Dunne, King, Tennet, Dynhoven, Elder, Hawkins, Keall, O'Connor, Robertson, Sutton, Tapsell, Tirikatene-Sullivan, and Wetere) and the coup organisers (Dalziel, Maharey, Dyson, and Tizard) there was 'total lack of rapport'. During the three years between 1990 and 1993, 'there was nothing that they said or did which gave us any confidence that they understood why the changes in the New Zealand society and the economy in particular were important' (Austin, interview, 1997).

The fourth reason for some MPs' *non-committal* support for Moore was his strong popularity in the electorate and their strong doubt over Clark's ability to match her rival in this regard. As discussed in Chapter 2, leaders of major political parties are expected to win an election. In today's media age, election campaigns have become highly 'presidentialized' (Rudd, 1992: 133), and as a focus of media attention, party leaders are

required to possess 'charismatic' personalities that can create a desirable public impression.

In addition, since its formation as a political vehicle for the 'working class', the PLP has steadily replaced representatives of this group with professionals with tertiary education in its composition (Gustafson, 1992: 277-278). In this change, Moore, with his true blue-collar background<sup>199</sup>, was seen to possess special appeal to voters who might not feel comfortable with the increasing middle class representation in the party.

In contrast, Clark, a former academic, was one of the MPs with a middle class background. Renowned for neither charisma nor grand vision<sup>200</sup>, Clark had never enjoyed the level of personal popularity, to which Moore was accustomed. She had trailed Moore in the 'preferred Prime Minister preferences' polls with a large margin since her name first appeared in the results (Vowles, et al, 1995: 155). As a result, many supporters shared Moore's view when he said, '[t]he people know Helen Clark is unelectable as Prime Minister of this country' (Edwards, 1993f).

Cullen points out that at the time of the leadership change, the opinion polls indicated Moore was the most preferred Prime Minister with no other Labour MP rating anywhere near him. He continues to suggest that if Clark's performance in the opinion poll rating had been better prior to the coup, it could have been seen by the 1993 uncommitted Moore supporters in a more favourable light.

[H]ad Helen's ratings been above Mike's, then you'd say: 'Well, that's sensibly suggesting there is a reason why the change occurred'. Given that there was not that situation, then certainly it seemed to me that it was unlikely to help us politically to make a change at that stage. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Another MP adds.

... I believed that when all things were weighed up that he had a greater ability to communicate our message to the public in a way which would win their support. In other words, I thought it would be more successful in attracting support if he was the leader. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Fifthly, it is suggested by some Clark supporters that some of the returning MPs may not have possessed sufficient and accurate knowledge about Moore as the leader. Although many of this group knew and in fact supported him in the 1990 leadership change, their experience with him as the leader was over the last seven weeks before the election when they lost their seats. Those seven weeks plus the preceding time when

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<sup>199</sup> Nick Venter, a political journalist for *The Dominion*, wrote prior to the 1999 election (and Moore's resignation from Parliament): 'The middle class has taken over the Labour Party'. According to his estimate, if Labour won the 1999 election, Moore would be the only Cabinet member who could genuinely claim the blue-collar background (Venter, 1999a).

<sup>200</sup> See, James (1998a), p.30.

Moore was the Minister of Overseas Trade did not provide a sound ground to form an accurate opinion about Moore's leadership. As Caygill puts it,

Between 1984 and 1990, Mike had been a Minister, one amongst twenty-odd. A high profile Minister in some respects but mainly for his overseas work. [But] leading a party is very different thing, and people... knew him, but hadn't necessarily formed an accurate judgement of how he would behave as a leader. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

In acknowledging that her knowledge of Moore as the leader was formed from the 'frantic few weeks' in 1990, King indicates that she was not absolutely certain about his capability in the top job in 1993, apart from his proven popular appeal (King, interview, 1998).

On the other hand, some MPs were more positive. Phil Goff, who had known Moore for a considerable length of time, is confident that he and his colleagues could have worked with him constructively.

Those of us who were in Parliament before then, I guess had also had the ability to work alongside Mike and knew what he was capable of, and knew what his strengths were in relationship to his weaknesses, and felt he was better able to win an electoral victory for the party. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Another returning MP is equally confident, despite his concerns about Moore's leadership problems. 'I was concerned about them, but I knew that I could work with him' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

Lastly, many of the wavering Moore supporters felt incensed at the timing of the coup - so shortly after the election - and the ambush style in which the coup was being conducted. Jim Sutton, for example, expressed his frustration with these points after the vote: 'They [the voters] feel they voted for Labour and Mike Moore - and indeed for myself - and that the package they voted for has been taken from them and they feel let down'. (This point has already been expressed by Damien O'Connor). With regard to the way the coup was executed, he continued: 'Someone went to the media and forced the whole thing early and publicly. That was not the right way to do it, and there's no doubt that the party has now suffered some damage'. He, however, did not condemn the leadership change itself, calling it 'always legitimate'. 'It would have been far better to settle down and to have got through the brief sitting of Parliament before Christmas, and to state our position clearly there and put the Government on the back foot'. 'Then, if there were people who wanted to challenge the leadership, that should have been done following the Christmas break' ('Timaru MP upset at Labour coup timing', *The Otago Daily Times*, 2 December 1993, p.2). Cullen worried that a change of leader so shortly after the election would unnecessarily compound the public's negative perception, (generated in the 1984-1990 period) of the party: the perception that it is willing to renege on its promises.

But immediately after an election which we had nearly won, you looked as though, yet again, we said one thing one week and another in the next week<sup>201</sup>. One week we said Mike's a great prospective Prime Minister and next week we said he was not good enough to be leader of the opposition. I didn't think the public thought that was too bright; either. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

### The strength of uncommitted supporters' support for Moore

This study has hypothesised that *non-committal* support is unreliable and thus if one's support composition contains a large portion of this type of support - such as Moore's - his/her leadership is vulnerable to a potential change. So, how strong was the support of those uncommitted supporters' for Moore? How reliable was it? Or, more specifically, if Moore had managed to fend off Clark's challenge in December 1993, how long could he have retained their support?

Answering any hypothetical question in politics is always difficult, if not impossible, and those who provided Moore with *non-committal* support at that time stress this point, too. However, what is interesting is that those uncommitted supporters acknowledge that their continuous support for Moore after December 1993 would have been uncertain or conditional if he had avoided the leadership coup. Asked whom he would have supported as the leader if the leadership vote had been taken at the beginning of either 1994 or 1995 (when a regular leadership review was scheduled to come up), one MP's reply is typically ambiguous:

I really don't know. I don't know, but it would've depended, I suppose, on two things. One was how Mike Moore had performed as Leader since the election, and secondly, what was the public's response to the party and to the leadership. I mean I would have supported whichever candidate that I thought would advance our cause most effectively. I don't have any problems with the personality and so on of either Mike Moore or Helen Clark. I'm perfectly happy to work with either of them. But I want to be a part of a... winning team. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Another uncommitted Moore supporter, Annette King asserts that if the coup organisers had been 'wise', they would have waited until the regular leadership review in February 1995 when they could have addressed Moore's leadership problems, which might have been evident to the 1993 uncommitted supporters by then. But in December 1993, 'the people who had voted for him didn't see what they [the Clark supporters] saw' (King, interview, 1998). Cullen agrees that choice of different timing for the coup might have produced a different consequence.

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<sup>201</sup> It is interesting to note that both sides used the question of trustworthiness as justification of their actions. While the Moore camp argued that a leadership change would make the whole premise of the election campaign a lie, the Clark supporters insisted that Moore's unwillingness to endorse the party manifesto was likely to be seen as by the public as a breach of trust.



... the interesting thing is, had Mike stayed as Leader post 93, had there been no leadership coup, what would have happened by February 95. And I think that's a very open question as to whether by that stage there would have been a feeling 'it's time for change in the leadership' or whether they wouldn't mind. My guess deep down is in that situation I think maybe by February 95, there would have been mood for change, which would have been somewhat stronger and more broadly acceptable. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Regarding the way her own vote would have gone if the vote had been taken in 1995, King's position lacked certainty. 'It's hypothetical... I can't say "yes" or "no" mainly because I would have had to be convinced that he was being a bad leader, and I don't know whether he would have been' (King, interview, 1998).

The differences between loyalists and uncommitted supporters are obvious. Unlike loyalists, uncommitted supporters lacked absolute commitment to Moore. They had some doubts about his leadership ability, yet decided to support him for reasons other than their faith in him, such as his popularity, the bad timing of the coup etc. Under different circumstances in terms of its timing etc., those uncommitted supporters' support for Moore still could not have been guaranteed. This again highlights Moore's leadership vulnerability for relying upon a large portion of these less reliable supporters. It seems that even if Moore had survived the leadership coup in December 1993, his position would have always remained insecure against another potential challenge.

### **Why did Moore fail to consolidate his leadership?**

Moore himself was well aware of the situation he was in upon returning to Parliament after the 1990 election. He made some conscious efforts and produced encouraging results in some areas, especially in the early period of his leadership. Why was he ultimately unsuccessful in altering his support composition? In Chapter 2, it is suggested that leaders' achievement of this task is hindered by institutional, practical, and personality reasons. In Moore's case, the following factors or a combination of them may provide some explanations.

#### **a. Ideological beliefs**

With regard to ideological beliefs, Moore needed to distance the party from its immediate past and re-establish an identity as a centre-left party. However, this process, as evidenced in David Caygill's selection as the deputy leader in 1993 when Moore was replaced, did not involve total disownment of the contentious 1984-1990 period (this point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). What was required was a shift of focus and an admission of the necessity to correct some 'wrongs' of the fourth Labour Government.

Although once considered left of the party - mainly due to his background as a blue collar worker and trade union official - Moore had gradually shifted his ideological position throughout his parliamentary career. As Lange puts it,

... like all of us are, and Mike is more willing than most to change his viewpoints. That is not to say he is wrong when he makes a change, nor to say that it is ill-considered. I am indicating to you that he is a person whose thinking is fluid. When he first came into Parliament... they used to call him 'pinky' because they thought he was a bit of a red fellow, and now of course they'd never dream of saying that. (Lange, interview, 1996)

Consequently, he ended up being 'probably more on the conservative side of the Labour Party', while avoiding becoming an 'ideologue' (Dyson, interview, 1998). This acquired conservatism was evident in his view of the economic policy. While insisting that he was not a free marketeer, but an interventionist in the economy in 'certain places', he strongly advocated a fiscally cautious approach to economics.

[You] cannot spend your way out of it. I'm not prepared to go into deficit budgeting again. We had to be as rough as guts in bells for the first time in about twenty years, and I wanted to preserve that (Moore, interview, 1998).

With this conviction, the admission of the 'past mistakes' during the fourth Labour Government years was neither a necessary nor appropriate action for him.

[Some said that] I should formally stand up to New Zealand and say: 'Oh, I'm sorry we were wrong. I apologise'. I wasn't prepared to do it. Although my economic strategy would have been different from Douglas... I'm not saying everything Douglas said was wrong. He was 75% right, given the options you had in 1984 - a nine billion dollar deficit, a wage and price freeze, for Christ sake. Where would you go? (Moore, interview, 1998)

## b. Skills

Although it is impossible to predict all tasks in advance, leaders are normally chosen for their suitability to handle a variety of (likely) situations and fulfil the required roles in them. This was not the case in 1990. Unlike his first task at the 1990 election where his strengths – such as natural flair for popular appeal - were an asset, his new task of rebuilding the party demanded quite different skills altogether. Those skills such as patience, careful planning, consultation, and adherence to agreed plans were not what Moore was renowned for. Perhaps the skills which Moore lacked most severely were those that unify people and groups. These were essential for both satisfying his expectations and alleviating his concerns.

Moore's track record showed that he was divisive, and his autobiography, *A Labour of Love*, contained evidence of that. It said that he faced stern objection from the party hierarchy when he contested for the candidacy for the Papatoetoe electorate for the 1978 election. Moore wrote: 'Head Office had vetoed my selection!' as well as '[t]he anti

Moore faction had won again!'. When Moore's loss was announced at the candidate selection meeting, two senior party members 'embraced each other, one joyfully saying to the other, "We stopped the bastard again"' (Moore, 1993b: 61-62). This open hostility was a rather astonishing reaction to someone who had been an MP for one term and Junior Vice President of the party.

When the new expectations, in particular re-gaining the trust of the EPLP, were thrust upon him after the 1993 election, Moore had to learn and adopt new leadership skills and style. The problem was that those skills did not come naturally to him, and they could be practiced only at the expense of his natural leadership style; his natural flair and flamboyant leadership style needed to be tamed. Initially, he appeared to be content to learn those new skills. But when he realised that the potential cost could be too great in light of the coming election, at which his natural skills would be a major asset, his attempt was dropped and the old Moore returned.

But why did he decide to discontinue his effort, while being fully aware of its likely consequence – the loss of his leadership? One reason suggested in this chapter was that he did not have any other option; he judged that the only way to save his leadership was to win the 1990 election (see Chapter 4). However, that was not all. His decision can be better understood if his personality is taken into consideration.

### c. Personality

Another important factor for understanding Moore's failure is his personality. In particular, two characteristics – self-confidence and ambition – seem to play a significant role. In relation to the former, Moore seemed to believe that no matter how impractical and unrealistic his ideas might seem, he would get final vindication. His book, *Fighting for New Zealand*, gives some insights.

Manufacturers are enjoying substantial growth into new markets like Australia because I negotiated CER ahead of National's programme. Rural New Zealand sits poised to reap the benefits of the Gatt round, the single most important agricultural development since refrigeration. I was mocked for a 'pie in the sky' approach when we began negotiating these deals (Moore, 1993a: 50).

Elsewhere, he recalled the 1992 electricity crisis, during which he suggested practical energy conservation ideas such as installation of hot water cylinder blankets.

I was attacked by the National Party and the media mocked the idea. Yet within the fortnight the electrical authorities were advocating water cylinder insulation and screening TV advertisements to promote the idea. Nobody said they were crazy. (Moore, 1993a: 124)

On the 'lambburger', an idea which he advocated as the Minister of Overseas Trade and Marketing in 1989 and for which he was made fun of by National and the media alike, he proudly asked: 'who's laughing now?' (Moore, 1993a: 66)

What becomes quite clear from these comments is a very high level of self-confidence. He recollected when he first became an MP in 1972 in the following words:

But when I got over my feeling of awe, I looked around at some of the people and thought, "I can do as well as this, if not better." And I was surprised at how I could capture the imagination of people. I was surprised at how easy it all was, and surprised that the more I read and the more I thought about things that this was the direction I should go. (McMillan, 1993: 34)

He was not one to underestimate his own worth as a politician. In his very first speech in Parliament as the Prime Minister, he commented on the leadership change which installed him in the top position:

I find myself in a difficult position 8 weeks before an election... That difficult position is not nearly as difficult as the position that Opposition members are in. *Their worst dream has come true*<sup>202</sup>. (NZPD, vol. 510, 1990: 4132; emphasis added)

Given this high level of satisfaction with his own achievements, all based on his ideas and initiatives, it was not hard to understand his reluctance to restrain his 'erratic' and 'dominant' tendency. For him, making odd mistakes was a natural and necessary part of a learning process. In *Fighting for New Zealand*, he quoted an anonymous philosopher who read:

"How do you avoid mistakes?  
By experience.  
How do you get experience?  
By making mistakes." (Moore, 1993a: 15)

Moore's other important characteristic is his strong, long-held personal ambition. Personal ambition is by no means unique amongst politicians. It is its intensity and his openness about it that separates him from his contemporaries. As already noted in Chapter 1, he first entered Parliament at the age of 23. After losing the seat three years later, he actively and unsuccessfully sought the candidacy for two seats which might return him to Wellington. Remarkably, his determination to become an MP again was not hindered by his discovery of having cancer. 'As soon as I was well enough I went to Wellington to study the seat that might be available'<sup>203</sup> (Moore, 1993b: 62).

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<sup>202</sup> Moore's self-evaluation may have been over-exaggeration but not entirely groundless. One of the former advisers to a National Finance Minister, Ruth Richardson (1990-1993), wrote that when the National caucus was informed of Palmer's victory over Moore in the 1989 leadership vote, 'there was spontaneous burst of applause'. 'National MPs were convinced Moore would have been a more dangerous opponent in the 1990 election' (Hames, 1995: 91-92)

<sup>203</sup> His illness returned after the 1978 election. He was hospitalised for treatment and returned to Parliament in September 1979 (Moore, 1993b: 69-79)

Apart from Parliament, the Labour Party always carried significant importance to him. His 1987 comments in his autobiography portrayed a man who had devoted his life to the Labour Party:

Apart from my mother, and because of her, the second most powerful influence in my life has been the Labour Party and Parliament. The party was my training college and Parliament has been my university. (Moore, 1993b: 175)

The Labour Party has been good to me and I love its ideals and principles. In return I have given everything I have. There hasn't been a day for over twenty years when I haven't thought of it, worked for it and been exasperated by it (Moore, 1993b: 181).

Like many other MPs, Moore's ambition extended beyond becoming a mere MP. His ambition was to become the leader of his beloved party and, of course, ultimately the Prime Minister. In fact, it was an ambition that he had held for a long time. Upon becoming the Prime Minister, he was interviewed by a journalist.

Q: When did Mike Moore decide to become Prime Minister?

A: (Moore): I was always going into politics.

Q: From what age?

A: I won my first election, I would have been seven or eight, for Mayor of Toytown. I kept the ballot papers for years thinking they might be useful.<sup>204</sup> (Burns, 1990)

In his autobiography, this self-professed 'political animal' (Clifton, 1994b) quoted one of his former colleague's comment that: 'The only job to have in politics is the Prime Minister or Minister of Finance, all other jobs are branch managers'. This was the point which he later wholeheartedly concurred: 'The more I experience of government, the more I understand his point' (Moore, 1993b: 179-180). Despite receiving obvious suspicions from his colleagues due to his open ambition<sup>205</sup>, he was unrepentant. After the 1990 General Election, regaining the prime ministership became his main focus<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup> In *A Labour of Love*, he indicated that while seeking another seat between 1975 and 1978, he was eager to have a "Boeing seat" (an electorate with an airport serviced by Boeing aircraft - a big-city seat) and preferably one with radio and television studios'. This view seemed to be formed with his future as a leader in mind. 'I have always thought one of [the then leader] Bill Rowling's problems was that he had difficulty getting on television when he was stuck in his sprawling Tasman electorate' (Moore, 1993b: 63).

<sup>205</sup> He complained in *A Labour of Love* that: 'Because I was different, every action I've taken has been given the most sordid of motives, the darkest flavour of ambition and conspiracy, which sometimes, but only sometimes, was accurate' (Moore, 1993b: 26).

<sup>206</sup> As recently as late January 1999 - more than five years after his ousting - Moore expressed his aspiration to the leadership role. 'I would like to be Prime Minister of this country. I think I understand a lot of what this country needs, and I've always felt that my base reaction to a lot of issues is similar to the heartbeat of New Zealanders. It is a disappointment (that I cannot be Labour leader) but this is life... what will be will be' (Rentoul, 1999). Wanting to regain the prime ministership is not unusual for former leaders. For example, see David Lange's comment in McMillan (1993: 63).

As already mentioned, the dilemma for Moore was that his weaknesses and strengths stemmed from the same source - his operational style. His attempt to meet the first two expectations (restoration of the EPLP's trust and re-establishment of party identity) and ease the concerns through the acquired 'inclusive' style of leadership was generally regarded as a reasonable success in the first two years. Nevertheless, he was not totally convinced of the merits of the changed leadership style which he was required to adapt to for his survival. His high level of self-confidence caused occasional 'slip-ups', and his tendency to distinguish people into an 'in-group' and an 'out-group' according to his trust level alienated many key people. His relationships with the party hierarchy and some caucus colleagues started to deteriorate considerably. This was the beginning of a vicious cycle for Moore.

Without the good will and trust of the party hierarchy and some of his colleagues, the leader had no choice but to rely on the skills and abilities for which he was originally selected as the leader in 1990. Besides, he was accustomed to over-riding internal oppositions and proven correct. In *A Labour of Love*, he recalled the election campaign in 1984:

I set up my base in the caucus room in Parliament Buildings and hired videos, telexes, telephones and word processors. Though I was never appointed campaign manager and some resented my usurping the role, I simply took over the function. At one point I received a letter firing me! I told the angry executive members that they were losing control, and that if we didn't win the election they could blame me. (Moore, 1993b: 104)

Of course, he was vindicated. Whether it was thanks to Moore's campaign management or not, Labour won the 1984 election handsomely.

At the same time, in order to realise his long-held ambition, he would no longer temper his energy and spontaneity; he knew that they were his biggest political assets to be an effective leader. In 1985, he stated: 'The Leader needs to be popular, the rest of us need to be competent' (O'Sullivan, 1985: 58). Moore judged that the maximisation of Labour's election chances would be achievable through his personal appeal to the electorate. Since the realisation of his dream (an election victory) seemed to be well within his reach, considering Labour's solid opinion poll performance, Moore decided to fully utilise his proven populist skills.

Strong personal ambition and a high level of self-confidence can be a dangerous mix. Through his long association with and dedication to the party, he seemed to consider himself a main defender or even embodiment of Labour's ideals and philosophy. (As mentioned in Chapter 3, this point was made by Clark during the leadership challenge in her criticism of his self-portrayal as 'the sole repository of Labour values'.) Realising

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One may point out, however, the intensity of Moore's desire was noticeably stronger than his contemporaries.

his personal ambition - through winning an election and himself becoming Prime Minister - became tantamount to achieving Labour's goals. A conclusion stemming from this logic could be that winning the 1993 election at any cost could be justified in view of the party's interest, and that anybody who opposed him personally should be dismissed as a threat to the party. As Judith Tizard attests: 'I think part of the problem is that Mike thought he *was* the Labour Party. So, anybody else's view of the party was wrong because he *was* the Labour Party' (Tizard, interview, 1998).

Not surprisingly, this type of behaviour intensified his leadership style problems - particularly his erratic tendencies and dominant behaviour. Such displays further strengthened the belief of the anti-Moore camp that he needed to be replaced.

e. Moore's limited control over realisation of the unity expectation

Moore was held responsible by his opponents for failing to maintain constructive working relationships with the party officials. However, to have a good relationship requires co-operation and good will on both sides as well as compatibility. While Moore may have been a difficult leader to work with, the lack of compatibility between him and the key party officials in terms of personality and ideologies (for which he alone should not have been held responsible) may have worked against the leader as well. In this sense, what Moore could have done in his capacity as the leader of the Parliamentary party to meet the expectation of restoring the EPLP's confidence may have been limited.

f. Sufficient caucus support – conflicting expectations/concerns

Moore's later decision to abandon his effort to be an inclusive leader may have been influenced by the fact that between 1990 and 1993, he had a sufficient number of caucus members who were not worried about his 'erratic' leadership style. Those MPs - including some frontbenchers - were prepared to tolerate his shortcomings. For example, Margaret Austin, attests that Moore's behaviour was not universally regarded as seriously problematic within the caucus.

He is ebullient. He generates ideas... that only last a week. And he is all onto something else, and good ideas never got developed to the point... where you could see they could be implemented. But, I don't really think in general the caucus was discontent, other than amongst the group who were open about the criticism of his presidential style. (Austin, interview, 1997)

The finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen, also says that Moore's 'erratic' leadership style did not pose a serious problem.

I think a lot of people in the party who had that sort of problem don't recognise that Mike's highly intelligent, reads enormously widely, has read more widely than most of them have. And although Mike himself is probably the first to admit

his thought processes aren't the most structured in terms of a trained intellect, they are much more intuitive. But I always thought it was a good balance. I'm not so intuitive. I do tend to be nerdy, and therefore, we complemented each other to some extent in that regard. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Also, supported by a sufficient number of the caucus members was Moore's stance towards the policy achievement of the fourth Labour Government. For example, one of the 1990 intake notes that Moore's reluctance to deal with (and detach the party from) the contentious period was echoed by some of her colleagues between 1990 and 1993.

I don't think that he wanted to front up to that period. And in some ways, I don't think all of the caucus did, either. Because there still were a significant number of people who were there at that time... I think that fronting up to some of those consequences of the economic restructuring that occurred in the 80s would make people feel quite... I think... guilty?... about the impacts. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Despite occasional rumours of a leadership challenge, Moore's position did not come under serious threat until after the 1993 election when the anti-Moore group secured the numbers with the help from the new intake.

Upon becoming the leader, Moore knew that gaining support from some of his caucus colleagues and the Party Head Office would be extremely difficult. They had already formed strong views of him as being unsuitable for a Labour leader, which could not be altered. As he states: 'People like Ruth Dyson decided from day one that was it. They were going to destroy you...' (Moore, interview, 1998). Although he would have hoped to see his opponents change their opinions of him, he knew that his survival ultimately depended on winning the 1993 election. While it was obvious to him that the majority of the 1993 new intake would not be sympathetic to him, he was confident that once the election was won, he could have turned (a sufficient number of) them around to sustain his leadership.

In analysing why Moore failed to consolidate his support base, two 'external' factors – both of which have already been mentioned – also seemed to play significant roles.

#### 1) The party organisation support

Although not eligible to vote directly on the leadership, this case study has evidenced that the party hierarchy can exert a significant influence on the fate of leadership. In Moore's case, it happened in two ways. Firstly, the knowledge of the deteriorating relationship contributed to solidifying the anti-Moore MPs' views of his inadequate leadership skills in terms of maintaining constructive working relationships.

Secondly, the party officials' selection of the new 1993 MPs damaged Moore's cause. Although the candidate selection policy was not specifically aiming to weaken Moore's position, the ideological criteria applied (especially in the selection round after the 1992 Party Conference) worked against him by eroding the relative strength of his existing support base. Moore's own right/moderate policy preference was not the line



which the selectors were looking for. While most of those new MPs did not possess strong anti-Moore feelings until they witnessed his problematic leadership style first-hand, their ideological stance may have made them more susceptible to such views.

## 2) Alternative leaders

Although it did not affect Moore's performance in satisfying expectations or alleviating concerns, Clark's emergence as the credible alternative leader was no doubt a crucial variable in ending his leadership. It provided his opponents with the focus for converting their dissatisfaction into opposition. Until then, the frustration with Moore was just disorganised and direction-less grumbling. Despite the widespread and deepening concerns about Moore amongst his opponents, Moore's leadership did not come under serious threat until Clark's emergence as 'the' challenger. Earlier rumours of potential challenges did not materialise partly for this reason. When the anti-Moore group secured both the numbers and an alternative leader in Clark, his fate was practically sealed.

A similar comparison can be made with another former Labour leader, Bill Rowling (1974~1983). Although Labour lost three consecutive elections under his guidance, he remained as the leader primarily because there was no obvious alternative, who was regarded by the colleagues as capable of competing (and hopefully defeating) the aggressive and domineering National Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon. However, the well respected Opposition Leader's position became precarious once a young lawyer from Auckland named David Lange came to Parliament in 1977. Lange was not only charismatic and ebullient but also a brilliant performer on television, the medium through which Muldoon had long enjoyed dominance against the sincere, yet uninspiring Rowling.

An interesting aspect of Clark's ultimate emergence as 'the' alternative leader is the extent to which it seems to have been helped by Moore's perceived problems. Although always considered potential leadership material, the ambitious deputy leader was not always 'the' only possible challenger against Moore in the anti-Moore camp's mind. During the 1990-1992 period, the left was encouraging Lange and Cullen to take up this task. However, as they refused and Moore's leadership problem worsened, the anti-Moore camp's attention shifted to Clark. Clark was regarded as an ideal candidate because her character and leadership style/skills were vastly different from those of Moore's. In contrast, Lange, who was not considered strong on organisation and discipline, became a less likely candidate. This suggests that an incumbent leader may help to create conditions and criterion for his/her successor, by (re)defining the image of an ideal leader for the time.

## Conclusion

The study's propositions set out in Chapter 2 have, generally, been validated by the case study on Moore. It has documented that there are indeed different kinds of leadership support - *positive* support (held by loyalists) and *non-committal* support (held by uncommitted supporters). As hypothesised in Chapter 2, *positive* support was formed based upon followers' sound knowledge of the leader. Moore's loyalists not only knew him well but also recognised him as a personal friend. Their belief in him as the best person to lead the party was unquestionable.

On the other hand, *non-committal* support turned out to be more tentative and conditional than that of loyalists, which was also in the propositions of the study. Uncommitted supporters supported him for various reasons without their holding the conviction of his suitability for the job. If some conditions (such as Clark's popularity and the timing of the coup) of the 1993 leadership challenge had been different, so would have been the votes of a number of MPs belonging to this non-committal group.

Moore's leadership experience confirms another core proposition of this study: leadership durability is greatly affected by the support composition at the time of his/her selection. Although Moore was elected by a significant majority in 1990, the numerical strength of his majority was misleading. The 'real' durability of his leadership – measured by the support composition – indicated otherwise. It later became clear that supporters of his were on the verge of being opponents.

### **The vulnerability of the Moore leadership and his 1990 support composition**

If the collapse of Moore's leadership was only a matter of time, it indicated the high (potential) vulnerability of his leadership. Indeed, it appears that this problem already existed at the beginning of his leadership in 1990. Two factors seemed to contribute to his high vulnerability.

#### The exclusive and short-term expectation in 1990

When he replaced Geoffrey Palmer less than eight weeks before the 1990 General Election - his proponents had only one expectation of him - to minimise the magnitude of Labour's inevitable election defeat. Fearing that they might lose their seats under Palmer's leadership, those MPs were willing to back the popular Cabinet Minister in the desperate hope that he might be able to reverse their diminishing fortune.

As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the primary roles of leaders of major political parties (including the NZLP) is to lead their parties to electoral victory. If they are considered ill-equipped to accomplish this task, their days as leaders are numbered. For example, Moore recollected in his autobiography that when the leadership position became available following Norman Kirk's death, he decided to cast his vote for the then

Minister of Finance, Bill Rowling, rather than for his 'old friend' and Deputy Prime Minister, Hugh Watt. Referring to this decision as 'one of the worst moments' in his political life, Moore nevertheless justified it by arguing that his seat stood a better electoral chance under Rowling's leadership (Moore, 1993b: 46).

In this sense, what happened in 1990 (Palmer's demise and Moore's rise) was not unprecedented. What was unique about the change was its imminent nature; the demand on a new leader's ability to win an election had never been so unpretentiously clear and urgent. Moore was supported for his popular appeal and nothing else. In other words, the 1990 leadership change was unique in the sense that a leader's electoral appeal was employed as 'the' criterion in such an open fashion. To illustrate this point further, at the time of the leadership change, Palmer was not under any criticism from his colleagues regarding his general leadership (or lack thereof) such as his skills or the ideological direction in which he was leading the party. In a panic mode, few in this group gave careful consideration to his general suitability as a leader, or his ability to lead the party after the election. The supporters' expectation of Moore was solely focused on the several weeks until the election day, and not beyond.

#### The weak support composition untested by a lack of alternative leaders

What characterised Moore's leadership was its weak support composition, which largely consisted of uncommitted supporters, with a very small number of loyalists. This was already obvious at the time of his election as the leader in 1990 when the majority of the caucus still seemed to be in favour of retaining Palmer. Moore acquired the top position through his predecessor's unexpected resignation, based upon the position taken by the majority of the Cabinet.

Through Labour's history, the holding of leadership selection to fill a sudden void due to either death or voluntary resignation was not unheard of. However, what distinguished the 1990 situation from the other precedents was the lack of any serious contenders for the leadership. The only other rival for Moore was a backbencher, Richard Northey, whose chance of winning was rated virtually nil. (In fact, the lack of rivals was one of the main reasons for Northey's standing.)

Despite the contest being virtually a one-horse race, however, Moore failed to convince a handful of MPs (between 19.30% to 33.33% of the whole caucus) of his worth. Moreover, even among his proponents there was little *positive* support for him.

Given the way in which Moore became the leader, one may question whether he could have attained the position under any other, more normal circumstances. For

example, Caygill admits that should he have decided to stand against his former colleague in 1990, Moore's victory would not have been necessarily guaranteed<sup>207</sup>.

I think if Mike had not taken the leadership when he did, he would not necessarily have got it easily after 1990. ... I'm sure that if Geoff Palmer had not stood down and continued to be the Prime Minister into the 1990 election, the Labour Party would still have lost. Geoff would then have stood aside. And there would have been a major battle within the caucus for the leadership. I might have stood against Mike at that stage. I think he probably would have won. But it's hard to know whether the caucus would have united readily behind him. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Caygill also says that while Palmer was the leader, he and Clark jokingly discussed their leadership aspirations after the 1990 election, following Palmer's expected resignation which would have been a consequence of the election defeat. The only question at the time, Caygill joked, was 'who will be the leader and who will be the deputy' (Caygill, interview, 1996). Of course, there is no way now to know for sure whether the Clark-Caygill team would have been victorious under those circumstances. Yet, what is interesting is that influential figures such as Caygill and Clark were considering contesting the leadership after Palmer only to cancel the plan because of his unexpected resignation.

Moore's popularity was doubtless an asset in Labour's effort to win the 1993 election. However, for equally imperative tasks such as formulation of sound alternative policies and restoring a trusting relationship with the EPLP, candidates like Clark and Caygill might have been judged as more suitable to lead the party by their caucus colleagues. For Moore, taking over the leadership from Palmer before the 1990 election could have been the only opportunity to occupy the top position that he had long aspired to.

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Moore's vulnerable original support composition (despite his large 'numerical' majority) contained very few loyalists and heavily depended on less reliable uncommitted supporters. In order to consolidate his position, Moore needed to satisfy the new set of expectations placed upon him while countering the concerns held by the suspicious uncommitted supporters and opponents. Unfortunately for Moore, however, he did not find achieving those new tasks easy or even feasible. There were some important incompatibilities between the tasks and his personality, skills, and ideologies. In particular, with regard to one of the expectations (restoring the EPLP's trust), the clash with the party hierarchy worked against him. Moore's failure at both tasks meant that his support composition remained weak throughout the 1990-1993 period and beyond. Given this, when the critical 1993

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<sup>207</sup> Moore himself believes that he could still have become the leader if Palmer had carried on and resigned, as expected, after the election. (Moore, interview, 1998)

intake joined the caucus and Clark became a credible candidate, Moore's loss of the leadership became inevitable.

This concludes the first case study on Moore. The next three chapters will deal with the second case study - the Clark leadership during the 1993-1996 period. Like Moore, Clark faced (a series of) caucus revolts. But unlike her predecessor, she withstood the pressure by retaining the necessary majority support. How did she succeed? What accounted for the two leaders' contrasting fates? Before these questions are examined, the next chapter will outline the development of discontent with Clark's leadership which eventually accumulated to the 1996 leadership crisis.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Clark leadership crisis overview: 1993 ~ 1996

#### Introduction

Clark's leadership between 1993 and 1996 was probably best characterised by its instability, induced by a series of difficulties which she encountered. Without enjoying the usual 'honeymoon period' during which newly selected leaders receive good wishes and warm receptions from people inside and outside caucuses, the new leader was in trouble from the outset. Discontent in the caucus steadily grew until it culminated in the 1996 leadership crisis, where she was directly asked by her colleagues to relinquish the leadership. However, unlike her predecessor, she successfully fended off the challenge. This chapter outlines the development of the discontent with Clark's leadership and her survival.

#### **The earliest sign of dissatisfaction – Maori MPs**

Only a few hours after taking over the leadership on the 1st of December 1993, Clark was confronted with a serious, yet predictable, challenge. As a result of almost two weeks of internal bickering, the party's three Maori MPs Koro Wetere, Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, and Peter Tapsell (who had already signalled their possible departure in case of Moore's defeat) had an emergency meeting with the new leadership team. This meeting included two Maori party executives, Dover Samuels and Shane Te Pou. Viewing the leadership change as an act of 'treachery', in Tapsell's words, they threatened to leave the party <sup>208</sup> (Orsman, 1993c). Although Clark settled this crisis by having more meetings, and through personnel decisions, i.e., agreeing to release Tapsell to the Speaker's job (despite the fact his appointment practically gave the Government a two-seat majority, and accordingly weakened Labour's position), the new leadership still needed to reunite the serious divisions within the caucus which transcended the three Maori MPs. Now there were two distinctive camps in the PLP, divided along the voting pattern on 1 December. Between them, little trust and good will existed.

In order to restore caucus unity, Clark used the first shadow cabinet position allocation as a tool to ease the anguish and frustration of the Moore supporters. On the same day she assumed the leadership, she and Caygill quickly interviewed all the MPs regarding their aspirations and preferred portfolios, while hinting that one of the

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<sup>208</sup> David Caygill recalls that at that time, he did not consider the four Maori MPs' threat serious. Rather, he sensed a lack of solidarity in the group as well as personal ambitions as a main motive for the action. 'As to the Maori issue... I didn't think there was a serious prospect of them leaving but I thought that they were using this as an opportunity for... well, to gain greater influence perhaps in policy terms, perhaps personally. It was hard to tell, partly... because they didn't agree amongst themselves'. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

vehement Moore supporters, Michael Cullen would remain as a finance spokesperson. Within several days, another Moore voter and staunch opponent of tax increases, Peter Dunne was assured that he would retain his revenue spokespersonship. Using a small management training session held north of Wellington, the leadership team, together with Michael Cullen and Senior Whip, Jonathan Hunt, finalised the shadow cabinet line-up (Caygill, interview, 1998; Hunt, interview, 1998). The list announced on 13 December 1993 turned out to be far from an occasion to reward her own supporters at the expense of her opponents. Clark's determination to unite the PLP was such that she refused to accept one Moore supporter's offer to sit on the backbench.

I had offered to go on to the backbench after the change in 1993 because I was clearly opposed to the change in leadership. That offer was declined by both Helen and David Caygill when I met with them after the leadership change. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Among the 11 frontbenchers, there were only four Clark supporters: Caygill (No.2); Jonathan Hunt (No.5); David Lange (No.6); and Lianne Dalziel (No.11). The other frontbench positions were all allocated to known Moore proponents: Michael Cullen (No.3); Koro Wetere (No.4); Clive Matthewson (No.7); Phil Goff (No.8); Annette King (No.9); and Peter Dunne (No.10). A special consideration was also given to the Maori MPs as a sign of reassurance of Labour's commitment to Maoridom. Apart from Wetere's retention at No.4, Tirikatene-Sullivan was awarded not only the respectable ranking of No.15 but also a newly created responsibility, Maori social development.

Social policy responsibilities, which were seen as vital by her supporters, went to Matthewson (social welfare), Dalziel (health), Margaret Austin ranked No.12 (education), Maharey (employment and labour relations), and Swain ranked No.24 (housing). Although given one of his desired portfolios, Maharey was ranked No.17 (which made a stark contrast to another 'rising star' of the left, Dalziel at No.11). There was no obvious reward for the other major Clark supporters, either; Hodgson (No.19); Kelly (No.20), Blincoe (No.23), Northey (No.26), and Tizard (No.29) who were all ranked below many Moore supporters.

Nevertheless, the party's relationship with Maoridom suffered another blow in early 1994 when three Labour MPs failed to second Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan's nomination as Chairwoman of the Electoral Law Select Committee. Although all the select committees' chairpersonships had been conferred and agreed upon between National and Labour at its first meeting before Christmas (with National's Tony Ryall as the agreed candidate for the chairpersonship of the Electoral Law Select Committee), Tirikatene-Sullivan suddenly consented to nomination by another Maori MP, Winston Peters of New Zealand First. Without prior knowledge of her intention, the other three

stunned Labour MPs - Pete Hodgson, Richard Northey, and Mark Peck - voted in accordance with the pre-made arrangement for Ryall. The action had been designed to test the stance on the Maori MPs of Jim Anderton (the Alliance) not of the three Labour MPs. However, Tirikatene-Sullivan still found the lack of support from her own colleagues unacceptable: 'I have, in a public sense, learnt that the loyalty of those three MPs was not with me, and the Labour caucus must now accept that the loyalty I have always shown will no longer be guaranteed' (Laugesen, 1994a).

Clark quickly condemned the action of the three MPs stating: 'There has been a long connection between her [Tirikatene-Sullivan's] family<sup>209</sup> and the Labour Party and I would hope the insensitivity of three members of a select committee wouldn't be the cause of a final breach' (Munro, 1994a). Clark later said on the radio that she believed that there was a sexist element in the three male MPs refusal to support Tirikatene-Sullivan's nomination<sup>210</sup>. The Southern Maori MP finally declared that the matter was over after receiving not only Clark's personal apology, but also apologies from the three MPs - the latter in front of the full caucus (Herbert, 1994a).

It was under these uncertain and unsettled circumstances that the third ranked finance spokesman, Michael Cullen, made an unusual speech in Parliament, which seemed to be addressed to his own colleagues.

The past few months have been for me a horrible and traumatic period in political terms that I do not wish to relive. One of the few political pleasures I have had is the fact that nobody has linked me with any of the 1,001 breakaway movements that have been touted, mooted, rumoured, or denied. Perhaps for once in this business, loyalty will be more than its own reward. I shall continue to serve the Labour Party in whatever capacity it needs or asks of me.

... All I can say is that Labour remains the best and only hope for a working social democracy in New Zealand. Whether we achieve that potential not for ourselves but for those whom we claim to represent, will in part depend on our capacity to stop fighting past battles, stop trying to restore reputations that were never lost, and instead concentrate on a future that is still ours to make. (NZPD, vol. 539: 432)

### **Further erosion of support – the first crisis**

From this point onwards, on her own admission, Clark encountered four 'bad times' before June 1996 when she faced a more direct threat - a request to step down by five frontbenchers (Roger, 1996: 55). The first of those occasions came in April 1994, when Labour's slide in the opinion polls continued, while the same polls registered a surge in support for the Alliance. In denial of a rumoured challenge against her<sup>211</sup>, she insisted

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<sup>209</sup> Her father, Eruera Tihema Tirikatene, first elected to Parliament in 1932, was a Labour MP from 1938 until his death in 1967. Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan succeeded to her father's seat by winning the by-election.

<sup>210</sup> Hodgson vehemently denied this claim as 'utterly without foundation'. He explained: 'It was a collective bungle, pure and simple'. (Herbert, 1994a)

<sup>211</sup> One of the names (constantly) mentioned as an alternative leader around this time was former Prime Minister, David Lange. He strongly denied his interest in the top job. See, Goulter (1994b).



that her leadership was safe, arguing that it would require some time for her to establish herself in the opinion polls: 'It's a new role [as leader]. Obviously the start to it has not been an easy one. But you carry on.' 'Most people are fairly realistic. They have seen my strengths, as someone strong on policy and strong on common sense, and needing time for those qualities to show through. They don't expect dramatic results' (Goulter, 1994a).

### **The second crisis**

The second major crisis of her leadership struck in August 1994, following the disastrous result of the by-election for Selwyn, where Labour fared badly (winning 10.3% of the valid votes), coming distant third behind National (42.3%) and the Alliance (40.3%)<sup>212</sup>. Throughout the campaign, the focus of the media was placed upon the crisis within the Labour Party, which was underlined by a series of incidents. The local candidate at the 1993 General Election (and also a close Moore supporter), Ron Mark refused to stand for the contest. Some of the local party members sympathetic to Moore were accused of having offered to leak Labour's campaign strategy to the Alliance. Secretary of Service Workers' Union and Clark supporter, Mark Gosche made a public call for a purge of dissident MPs - Moore, Peter Dunne, Jack Elder, George Hawkins, and Ross Robertson. The Labour leadership became a main issue during the election campaign, and the Labour candidate, Marian Hobbs, often found herself defending Clark (Gibbs, 1995: 80).

In light of the magnitude of the defeat in the by-election, fierce argument between the opposing factions over the causes of it, and the method to recover from it, was expected to take place in the first caucus meeting after the by-election. In the meantime, Clark directed all the caucus members to leave all comments on the by-election result to herself and David Caygill. Prior to the caucus meeting, Clark, putting on a brave face, said that the by-election came at the wrong time and in the wrong place, adding:

We respect the decision the voters made in Selwyn to vote tactically, sensing that the Alliance had a better chance of winning. We go on this week, improving our policy, our organisation, and aiming our sight at the first MMP election. (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 15 August 1994)

After six hours of debate at the caucus meeting, Clark emerged having retained the leadership, announcing that there were no recriminations. 'The unanimous conclusion was that a house divided against itself can't stand and that a public perception of bickering is always fatal, and was in [Selwyn]' (MacLennan and Laugesen, 1994: 1). She also denied bitter inter-faction fights which could trigger a 'radical lurch' to either a

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<sup>212</sup> In comparison to the 1993 General Election when Labour came a close second behind National, the party's share of votes plunged by 27.1%. For detailed account and analysis of the Selwyn by-election, see Gibbs (1995).

left/right direction: 'Virtually no one is interested in defining the precise point in the gradient in the right-left, liberal-conservative spectrum that Labour might sit on. I don't think the public's interested' (MacLennan and Laugesen, 1994: 1).

### **Clark's tentative leadership stability**

After surviving the second crisis, Clark enjoyed a reasonably secure period, which was accompanied by Labour's regaining of the second spot in the opinion polls. This was achieved despite having lost one member, Peter Dunne, who left to form Future New Zealand in October 1994. Dunne had been critical of Labour's policies under Clark's leadership for a while and his predictable departure<sup>213</sup> was seen by Clark as helpful in further defining Labour's position (Edwards, 1994d)

In December 1994, one year after the leadership change, Clark appeared to be enjoying some security. In an article entitled 'Coup just a memory now', a political journalist, Brent Edwards commented that she 'faces the Christmas break in a strong position though opinion polls have her languishing within the margin of error and Labour still a long way behind National'. Due to her effort to rebuild caucus unity, '[n]ow there are few either inside or outside the caucus who quibble at her leadership'. Edwards continued: 'For many MPs familiar with Moore's ad hoc, almost frantic planning, the sense of clear direction was a godsend. It won over some of her toughest critics, including close Moore supporter Geoff Braybrooke' (Edwards, 1994d). As a sign of such security, at the first caucus of the year in early February 1995, where the leadership (together with deputy leadership) was routinely reviewed, the Clark-Caygill leadership team was re-elected unopposed. On Clark's security as the leader at this stage, *The Dominion's* political journalist, Simon Kilroy commented as follows:

Regarded by party insiders with the best connections in the wider party in years, Ms Clark has an iron grip on the leadership. Partly it is the good job she has done over the past year in developing a policy acceptable to the bulk of the party and in rebuilding caucus and party unity after the destructive coup in which she took the job from Mike Moore. But equally important is that there is no alternative candidate willing to take the job and likely to make enough of a difference to offset the impression of instability caused by yet another leadership change. (Kilroy, 1995)

### **The third crisis**

This relatively calm period<sup>214</sup> ended in October 1995 with the release of a *One Network News-Colmar Brunton* poll result. In the poll, Labour received an abysmal 16 per cent of the party support - an eight per cent drop from the previous month - which meant

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<sup>213</sup> During the Selwyn election campaign, Dunne had a meeting with National Prime Minister, Jim Bolger regarding his support for the Government.

<sup>214</sup> The loss of two further senior MPs Clive Matthewson and Margaret Austin to a newly formed 'centre' party, United on 28 June 1995, had little effect on Clark's leadership.

there would be only 21 MPs in the next Parliament if translated to seats under the new electoral system. Clark herself did not fare well, either - at 3 per cent backing as 'preferred Prime Minister'. This result quickly triggered speculation about Clark's leadership position. Although she dismissed the result as a 'rogue poll' (Roger, 1996:55), many of her caucus colleagues were not so sure, and were prepared to express their concerns at the next caucus meeting scheduled for 12 October. In fact, prior to the caucus meeting, one MP, George Hawkins, publicly predicted a leadership challenge (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 13 October 1995).

Although not publicly expressing their views, Hawkins was by no means the only MP who was worried about the state of the party. At the crucial meeting, instead of waiting for someone to raise the issue, Clark herself put her position and latest showing in the opinion poll on the table for discussion. She stated at the press conference afterwards: 'I said that I was prepared to fight, that I believed the policy was right, I believed I would do a very good job as prime minister, if people don't agree, let me know' (Kilroy and Spedon, 1995). After a three-hour discussion, she retained a majority of support once again, and only one member called for a vote on her leadership in the following week only to be 'shouted down' (Roger, 1996: 55). Clark's leadership and her possible resignation, however, was certainly discussed at the meeting. Although caucus members, like many meetings of this nature, spoke in a 'somewhat coded' fashion, the meaning was quite clear to all the attendees (Cullen, interview, 1998). Many caucus members were deeply concerned about Labour and Clark's performance in the polls.

As an indication of such concerns, the third ranked, finance spokesperson, Michael Cullen, became seriously interested in the leadership position. About this time, he met Clark and discussed their views. He, however, was interested in taking over the top position only with the incumbent's consent.

When discussions took place [in the caucus], I certainly had a discussion with Helen, about whether that should occur because that was a point where our poll ratings really had collapsed in the previous two or three months and things were disastrously bad... I had already made it clear that I was not prepared to become Leader as a result of a coup. I was not interested. It was only if there was a consensual change that I was prepared to become Leader... (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Perhaps sensing such tension, at the 12 October caucus meeting, Clark said that she would step aside if she felt that her presence was damaging the party. 'If I assess I can't make an effective contribution, of course, I'd reassess my position. I'd be crazy not to' (Kilroy and Spedon, 1995).

Clark's pledge at the caucus meeting, however, unwittingly formed a platform for future leadership discontent. Although her exact words were not formally recorded, the

Clark supporters and her critics interpreted them in a completely different manner. While the former group viewed them as a mere expression of her intent to review the situation, the latter took them as definite promise to re-consider her position with the implication that a voluntary resignation would be a likely consequence if Labour's poll ratings did not improve. As Annette King attests:

...she actually said that she would, I think her words were [that] she would be prepared to re-look at the situation if things didn't improve in the new year. I think she said a month and I can't remember whether it was March or something like that. And that was certainly something that people remembered. (King, interview, 1998)

Nevertheless, as already noted, the caucus decided to support Clark at the meeting. They accepted the leader's argument that the party's policies had been well received in the community and that the problem rested with the presentation. Braybrooke, for instance, gave the leader his strong endorsement.

I don't think there is going to be a leadership... I'm one of [the] people who always backed Mike Moore and he's still a great friend of mine. But no, we are not going to change our leader. Helen Clark maybe is not the...you know, greatest on television, but she's a very sincere person. She's a person who I have personally gained an enormous amount of respect for her since she became the leader. I tell you now, once you get to know that good lady, she's good. The trouble is we've just got to make sure that the people of New Zealand know as we in caucus know her. I've changed my mind about her. I'm honest about that. She's a good lady. (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 13 October 1994)

After the caucus meeting, Clark argued that if the caucus stopped 'whispering' and if she adopted a new strategy, Labour would soon escape its miserable situation. The new strategy, explained by Clark was:

I will get out of Wellington, out of the ivory tower, Bowen House, and Parliament Building and get out into the communities of New Zealand and talk a lot of more with people. (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 13 October 1995)

To ensure her success, the caucus agreed to set up a 'task force' to reassess the party's entire strategy. The members were: Annette King, Jim Sutton, Trevor Mallard, Steve Maharey, Rick Barker, Mark Peck and Ruth Dyson, covering both factions of the caucus.

#### **The fourth crisis**

The fourth difficulty for Clark came after Labour's announcement of its party list for the 1996 election, the first to be held under the new MMP system, it was released in late October 1995. The list, compiled by the Moderating Committee and based upon recommendations made by the six Regional Selection Conferences, was controversial from its early stages. The aim of the list was to be 'made up of the sorts of people the

party had come to represent' (Street, 1997b: 151). Special consideration was given to candidates' gender<sup>215</sup>, ethnicity, geography, age, skill, and political experience. For incumbent MPs, since the Committee worked on the vulnerability of each seat and 'whether or not any protection for sitting members was required' (Street, 1997b: 152), the ranking on the list was, in a way, an indication of their 'worthiness' in the eyes of the party<sup>216</sup>.

The final list announced on the 29th of October, brought mixed fortune to the sitting MPs. Two list only MPs, Lianne Dalziel and Jonathan Hunt (who had declared that they would not contest a constituency seat), were ranked within the first ten positions. In contrast, another list only MP, Jack Elder, who had been openly critical of the party's direction and a close Moore ally, was ranked a lowly 40, the bottom position allocated to any sitting MP. Infuriated with Moore supporters' treatment as well as the inclusion of a controversial Maori activist, Tariana Turia (No.21) and a prominent trade unionist, Mark Gosche (No. 6), Moore and his supporters openly criticised the list. For example, calling the list a 'suicide note' (MacLennan, 1995b), Moore stated: 'When moderates like Jack Elder, Jim Sutton, Damien O'Connor and Phil Goff are at the bottom and the Mark Gosches are at the top<sup>217</sup>, I'm beginning to get the hint that the party is changing fundamentally and that I and people like me are looking more like dinosaurs' (Herbert, 1995a). Braybrooke commented: 'It's obvious people haven't been selected on merit. They've been selected on their gender, their ethnic background, their political correctness (MacLennan, 1995d).

The announced list damaged Clark herself. Despite her personal encouragement to her colleagues to put their names forward for the list, the ranking, which was primarily designed to 'complement rather than supplement' the constituency nominations, failed to provide many sitting MPs with higher, electable positions. The 'marginality of their electorate', rather than their talents, appeared to be given priority (Herbert, 1995c). Nevertheless, a handful of MPs were still left with hopeless rankings in marginal constituencies. Two such MPs were Mark Peck and his fellow 1993 intake, Rick Barker. Ranked at a hopeless No.22 and No.29 respectively, they publicly demanded their names be withdrawn when the list was published. Barker explained that he reluctantly agreed to put his name forward because of Clark's invitation to do so. The

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<sup>215</sup> On the gender issue, Street stated that '... in constructing our Party List, we had to be mindful of the need for gender balance to which we were committed and careful to do our best to enhance the chances of our endangered women MPs'. (Street, 1996: 454)

<sup>216</sup> A frontbencher, Phil Goff, withdrew from the regional list in order to avoid humiliation after failing to win even the 11th slot.

<sup>217</sup> Despite Moore's criticism, some of the 1993 Clark supporters did not receive favourable treatment: Ruth Dyson (No.20), Mark Peck (No.22), John Blincoe (No.24), Martin Gallagher (No.25), Suzanne Sinclair (No.28), Rick Barker (No.29), Richard Northey (No.30), and Pete Hodgson (No.31). Also, Phil Goff, Jim Sutton (No.19) and Damien O'Connor (No.33) both returned to Parliament at the 1996 election by winning their constituency seats.

leader wanted the list to be filled with recognisable names. The undertaking that he was given then was that all MPs would have the opportunity to study the list before it was made public and, if they so wished, to withdraw their names. To Barker's dismay, the list was published without his prior approval (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 1 November 1995).

### **Increasing support for Clark**

Although Clark later confessed: '...with the fiasco which followed the list I was really pessimistic about [it] ever picking up again' (Roger, 1996: 55), she managed to survive this latest challenge. Her position was re-confirmed and strengthened first at the two-day caucus retreat in Greymouth. For example, after the caucus meeting, one of the persistent Clark critics and Moore supporter, George Hawkins, publicly expressed his satisfaction with the result of the meeting.

Caucus has had things explained to them. I think that people are somewhat more cheerful now than they were the week before. There is a resolve that we all go out there and get Labour's message across rather than doing the squabbles. (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 9 November 1995)

Geoff Braybrooke, was equally positive.

I am much happier leaving than I was when I came. And I feel much better in myself. And I think that we are going to do all right.

He further asserted that fluctuating popularity was a problem which all political parties encounter and that Labour was no exception, adding, 'I'm confident we're going to go up' (*Morning Report*, Radio New Zealand, 9 November 1995).

Clark's position received another confirmation at the annual Party Conference held between 17 and 19 November where she was enthusiastically welcomed by the delegates<sup>218</sup>. The President, Street, mindful of the recent leadership problem, paid a special tribute to Clark, in which the party's unequivocal support for her was pledged.

I have watched Helen Clark this week speak at state luncheons and official functions honouring the Canadian Prime Minister and the President of South Africa. She is magnificent. She will be a remarkable Prime Minister. She has an enormous experience and understanding which enables her to speak with feeling and meaning to world leaders. She has her own reputation in international circles which makes her universally respected.

And she understands what New Zealanders need. She knows about the overcrowded, under-funded kindergartens and the desperate choices some families

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<sup>218</sup> After the conference, Michael Cullen said: 'I think it [the conference] has made it [Clark's leadership] very much stronger. I think people have united in the party' (Young, 1995d). Cullen, Caygill and Dalziel gave 'clear endorsements' of Clark's leadership in their speeches (Taylor, 1995). Also, another journalist observed: 'However stage-managed the event was, it strengthened in caucus her position as leader because she can point to the backing she received from the wider party' (Boyd, 1995).

have to make between food bills and medical bills. She knows that poverty is a reality in this country. And she has a passion to change that.

Helen, you have our love and support as a Party. We will work hard to get you into the position Jim Bolger is minding for you at the moment. (NZLP, 1995: 6)

### **Persisting divisions and discontent**

Beneath MPs and the party's efforts to appear publicly united, discontent continued simmering. Some Clark supporters suggest that her leadership had been constantly under pressure in the caucus during this entire period. In this sense, the four crises listed by Clark were merely public eruptions of such on-going dissatisfaction, which was the underlying problem for the Clark leadership. The frustration may have been tempered for a while after discussions in the caucus, but they were due to return soon afterwards as the core of the problem - Labour and Clark's poor opinion poll performance - remained unsolved. As Maharey notes, during this period, 'every few weeks someone was trying to chuck her out for no reason that was obvious' (Maharey, interview, 1998).

The factor which aggravated Clark's leadership instability was the deep divisions in the caucus, which were a direct legacy of the bitter 1993 leadership coup. As Cullen notes: 'The 1993 vote division basically remained as an undercurrent right the way through the 1993 to 1996 period, and didn't really come to an end until the 1996 election campaign' (Cullen, interview, 1998). A then new MP, Rick Barker makes the following statements which illustrate the state of the caucus divisions vividly.

I was just amazed on occasions here that some people don't talk to each other. And people who had differences of opinion who simply wouldn't speak to each other or air it. Wouldn't air it. Wouldn't try and resolve it, which made life very difficult. (Barker, interview, 1998)

In fact, another MP, Liz Tennet lists the state of the party after the 1993 leadership change as one of the main reasons that she decided to retire from Parliament at the 1996 General Election<sup>219</sup>.

The coup, the expedient rearrangement of leadership positions, and the resulting parlous state of Labour politics after 1993 so disillusioned me, I decided to withdraw from national politics. (Tennet, 1998)

The caucus dispute was not viewed by most MPs as directly linked to the party's policy direction or philosophy. While a few MPs mention an ideological cleavage between the two camps - especially in terms of their views of economic policy - its significance as a cause of the divisions is universally downplayed. To be sure, since the majority of the Clark supporters in 1993 were derived from the caucus left and the

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<sup>219</sup> Tennet stood unsuccessfully for the mayoralty race for Wellington in 1995. She retired from national politics after three terms at the 1996 election.

Moore supporters from the moderate/right, some differences in policy views between the two sides existed. For instance, Damien O'Connor generalises the Clark supporters as 'idealists' with 'wetter' stances on economics and her critics as 'pragmatists' with a 'drier' approach to issues. However, he quickly explains that 'polarisation of the party is not what some would probably make out exists' (O'Connor, interview, 1998).

O'Connor's fellow 1993 intake, Rick Barker agrees:

I don't believe there is a caucus left and caucus right... I have challenged several of them to define for me the difference between left and right, where is the line or cleavage in the caucus and to say this group is left, that group is right. And none of them, no-one, has been able to pinpoint policy areas, philosophy divides. The caucus, in my view, ... is reasonably homogeneous in terms of their views on education, on health and so on... the role of the state, etc, etc. (Barker, interview, 1998)

Annette King acknowledges the presence of the divisions in the caucus in terms of policy stances, but quickly adds that it has always been a norm for Labour:

There are definitely two distinctive groups within our caucus, which is quite normal in a party, that is made up of people who're conservative and people who're very progressive. So, you've got... the whole range in our caucus. And it's probably always been the case in the Labour Party. You've got those who're considered to be centre-right - this is within the Labour Party's context, not within the context of New Zealand - and those who're considered to be centre-left. And there are two distinct groups within the caucus. (King, interview, 1998)

King further asserts that the dispute was never about Labour's major policy direction, citing economic and health policies as areas where there was no disagreement within the caucus. At the same time, she witnessed 'so-called left wing' MPs occasionally supporting someone like Jim Sutton, generally considered a right-winger of the party, in policy debate. She believes that although the divisions were often portrayed as ideologically driven by the media, they principally revolved around 'personalities' and friendships. She continues:

I think the real trigger for quite a distinct grouping, that's quite obvious between the two groupings of the caucus... was the deposing of Mike Moore. That acted as a defining point, if you like, for the acceptance that there were two sides to this argument. And what I suppose has developed is the people who were initially, you know... in support of Mike Moore in 1993, have formed friendships, and the people who supported Helen formed friendship. (King, interview, 1998)

Along the same lines, Steve Maharey attributes the caucus internal divisions to the emotional 'wounds' suffered by MPs during the brutal few weeks leading up to the caucus vote. He stresses that MPs are susceptible to emotional reactions just like ordinary people whom they represent.

Politicians are no different. In fact, politicians are worse in many cases than people outside politics. They hurt more and feel more deeply by hurts than you'd



ever expect politicians to do. I think that's because all politicians are heavily ego driven, but their ego gets hurt [like] most people. So, I think most of it was... nothing to do with different discussion about policy or whatever, but more to do with what ... this change [was] about, who the hell were you [to] make this change, why did you call me that and etc. etc. And once it got rolling, it just never seemed to stop. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

According to Michael Cullen, there were two mistakes made by the 1993 Clark supporters in their challenge against Moore, which made the division more difficult to heal. The first mistake was their choice of the timing for the coup, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The second was their refusal to let Cullen, a known Moore supporter, take the No.2 position as a sign of reconciliation between the two sides<sup>220</sup>. Regarding this second reason, Cullen asserts:

...because they should have voted for me as Deputy Leader. It was very silly not to have healed the wound as quickly as possible by making the leadership clearly representative of the two groups who had divided in '93. But by not doing so, that helped keep the wound open. There was a really intense feeling that given that they changed the leader, then it was utterly wrong I wasn't the deputy leader<sup>221</sup>. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

It is interesting to note that although the caucus disputes were centred around the bruising 1993 leadership change, Clark personally did not receive any blame from the 1993 Moore supporters. For example, Annette King, who was deeply upset over the 1993 coup (see Chapter 3), attests:

Interestingly enough, I didn't direct my anger at Helen Clark. She was the person who became the horse that was in the race for them. Perhaps 'cos I had known her in the past, I knew her when we had been in Government. So, I didn't direct my anger at her, but... there were people I was angry with... the people who had manipulated, and manipulated me. I felt really as if I was badly let down by some people in the caucus whose agenda wasn't concentrating on a Labour Government or a Labour victory. (King, interview, 1998)

There were no disputes over Clark's leadership style per se, either. For example, asked whether he had any particular concerns about Clark's leadership during this turmoil period, Jack Elder, one of Moore's closest colleague, replies:

No, not really. I actually... funnily enough... I still quite like Helen. Helen is a very straightforward, intelligent person. (Elder, interview, 1998)

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<sup>220</sup> One may challenge his viewpoint. As seen in Chapter 3, not all the votes for the deputy's position were cast along the same lines as for the leadership position, although Cullen's pro-Moore stance influenced some Clark supporters' decision.

<sup>221</sup> Appointing the leader and the deputy leader from opposing sides was believed to facilitate the healing process of the caucus in 1983. When David Lange became the leader of the party, his deputy's position was fought between two candidates. They were Palmer, backed by the 'A team' (which supported Rowling) and Moore, supported by the 'B team' (that pushed for Lange's ascendancy). Palmer's one-vote victory ensured that 'there would be at least accommodation between the two factions and eventually a reconciliation and realignment' (James, 1986: 157)

Elder is not alone in his praise for the struggling leader. As is to be examined in more detail in the next chapter, the non-Clark supporters generally valued the new leader's leadership skills highly. Similarly, since she did not appear to be a major instigator of the 1993 leadership change, she hardly found herself as a target of residual negativity from the coup. Rather, it was directed at her supporters who were at the centre of the change. However, there were a few exceptions to this, and the former leader, Mike Moore, was one of them.

### **Moore's bitterness towards the leadership**

Another legacy of the 1993 leadership change facing Clark was Moore's ever-present bitterness towards her and her supporters. It kept the caucus divisions alive, and his public anger at his dismissal also made Labour's problems with the opinion polls even more difficult. After December 1993, the former leader vented his frustration through his constant sniping at his successor<sup>222</sup> and the party at large. Shortly after losing the leadership, he declared he would campaign against the 'neurotic Left' of the party (van Beynen, 1993), and in 1995, he called the party a 'toxic waste dump' (MacLennan, 1995e) and 'a bit of a poisoned chalice' (Hunt, 1995). In March 1996, he wrote:

Labour just can't get momentum. Some of its people just don't get the message of the polls. I live in a different world from some of the Klingons from outer space who spend all their time talking about issues that ordinary Kiwis don't care about. (Moore, 1996a)

In another newspaper article, the former leader asked 'why is New Zealand Labour at its lowest ebb since polling began?' His diagnosis was that his beloved Labour Party had been taken over by people 'who want everyone to look like them' with minds closed to new ideas. Also blamed were paid officials who 'have acted undemocratically and worked to undermine ideological opponents and support favourites'. His successor did not escape his (although rather indirect) attack, either. In an unfavourable comparison to successful Labour parties in other countries such as Britain, Moore pointed out that one of the differences between them was that the other Labour Parties have a hunger for office as well as 'acceptable leaders'. He further raised a question over the competence of Clark: 'Do it [NZLP] and its leaders<sup>223</sup> understand the complexities of the global economy?' (Moore, 1994b)

Also through a series of newspaper articles and his weekly column in *The Sunday News* (entitled 'People's Man'), he pushed his own views on issues like law and order, mental health, compulsory superannuation, and racial issues, which were often at

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<sup>222</sup> Moore was reported to have told Clark to step down as the leader in early March 1996 after a series of poor opinion poll results. (Herbert, 1996a)

<sup>223</sup> Who were included in the plural 'leaders' was not clear from the context.

variance with Labour's official positions. In addition, the timing of some articles' publication seemed to be designed to cause disruption to the party. For instance, one of his newspaper articles 'Labour Party "has lost its way"' (Moore, 1994b), in which he criticised both the Clark supporters in the 1993 coup and the party hierarchy, was published on the morning of the Canterbury regional council meeting. He did the same before and during the annual party conference in 1995, that was crucial to Clark's leadership after the two recent crises (caused by a series of bad opinion poll results and the post-party list fiasco). The day before the conference, there was an article called 'It's time for more humour in politics' in a newspaper. In this article, he asserted: '[It is] Not for me at this time to write of the tensions and humour that surrounded leadership battles in New Zealand. The party would not like it. So I will not talk about New Zealand. Anyhow, I am not bitter about my defeat' (Moore, 1995a). However, from his past criticism of political correctness prevalent in Labour, it was obvious that his undisclosed target was his own party. Moore also published an article entitled 'Mike Moore's conference call', which was described as 'the speech he would have given' to the party conference 'if he was still leader' (Moore, 1995b).

Moore's bitterness about his leadership loss was also apparent in his refusal of Clark's offers of a front bench position and/or trade shadow cabinet portfolio. On one occasion, he said: 'I am not for sale, nor are the issues I believe in for sale' (MacLennan, 1995c). He appeared even upset to be approached as a means to boost Labour's flagging popularity. 'MPs who have been to see me are talking about their seats. They are not talking about their constituents' (Edwards, 1995b).

The new Party President, Michael Hirschfeld, who took over the presidency from Maryan Street at the 1995 Party Conference, was acutely aware of the danger of Moore's behaviour. Upon election, the successful businessman and long-time personal friend of Moore was determined to bring back the former leader into the Labour team again. While Clark did not ask him to take on this task,

I think she knew I was quite explicit that, you know, you can't have people with ability and drive who don't play their role in the party. There is no doubt that divisions between leaders [are] inherently damaging. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

### **The Moore problem continued**

Although the new President continued his effort, it was fruitless<sup>224</sup>. Moore was not ready to forgive or forget what had happened to him in December 1993. The leadership,

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<sup>224</sup> It was not until mid September 1996 - in the middle of the election campaign - that Moore agreed to endorse his successor's leadership and accept the long-standing offer of a frontbench position as well as the spokespersonship of foreign affairs and trade. However, even this late decision appeared to be 'forced' by the leader of the New Zealand First Party (NZF), Winston Peters' open offer of a cabinet position if NZF was involved in the next Government without Labour. The offer, devised by Moore's friend and NZF MP, Michael Laws, was aimed to destabilise Labour by exposing its ongoing internal

which was not only a vehicle to realise his long-held ambition to become Prime Minister again but also to recover the top position of his beloved organisation, which had been cruelly taken away from him. As Michael Laws, a rebel National MP who tried to lure Moore to form a new political party during this period, described:

He [Moore] had no children; the Labour Party was his surrogate charge - his entire emotional energy had been projected into that cause. Losing the leadership was like being banished from the family hearthside. (Laws, 1998: 260)

As a result of his behaviour, there was constant speculation about his future in the Labour Party (eg., Young, 1995a). He was frequently reported by the media as being about to launch a new 'centre' political party<sup>225</sup> (eg., Riddell, 1995). In fact, he is reported to have considered joining two Labour colleagues who formed the United Party at the end of June 1995, only to decide to forgo the opportunity, possibly because he was not offered the leadership, but more likely because of his tribal loyalty to the Labour Party<sup>226</sup> (Austin, 2000). On different occasions, various politicians such as Michael Laws and his fellow National MP, Peter McCardle, plus his close Labour ally, Jack Elder, openly invited him to start a new political party which they said they would join (see especially Laws, 1998: 259-266 and 281-297. Also Booker, 1996; Campbell, 1996).

Meanwhile, within the caucus, Moore's disruptive behaviour further strengthened the entrenched attitudes of the two camps towards each other. In Ruth Dyson's view:

Mike's antagonism was just overwhelming. He just dominated everything and soured everything, and the caucus was a very unpleasant place to be. It was very nasty, very sort of bitching at each other, and really destructive. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Cullen reports that as Labour's misfortune and Moore's behaviour continued, the feeling of vindication of their positions in 1993 on both sides intensified.

... the situation we were in was that those who voted one way kept feeling, 'Well, we were right, weren't we?' 'This wasn't going down with the public, wasn't going to work out right for the party.' Whereas those on the other side, as Mike's behaviour got somewhat more erratic and, at times, unhelpful... felt: 'Well

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problems. (See, Laws, 1998: 360-361) With this offer being put in front of him, Moore had to declare his position in relation to Labour publicly. Laws' book vividly illustrated Moore's hesitation to make a decision on his future despite constant pressure by his supporters.

<sup>225</sup> This speculation was fuelled by his constant refusal to commit himself to the party. Asked about his possibility of leaving Labour, he replied in April 1994: 'Nobody can ever rule that out' (Clifton, 1994b). In March 1996, Moore put a one-page open survey request - 'I need your advice' - on local community papers in his constituency. In one question, he asked his constituents: 'Should MP's [sic], like Jim Anderton and Peter Dunne, who resigned from the parties for which they stood when they were elected, also immediately resign from parliament and contest a by-election?' (*Christchurch North News*, 2 March 1996, p.2)

<sup>226</sup> Austin has formed this observation from her conversations with Moore since the 1996 leadership crisis (Austin, 2000).

Gosh, we were right to do it anyway because, look at what has happened since.' So, you really had two groups feeling totally justified. Each of whom still felt terrified of the fact we were not doing well enough. And therefore they were inclined to blame each other of course. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Not surprisingly, Clark's leadership performance was adversely affected by this constantly hostile atmosphere in the caucus. Barker attests:

...she wasn't able to [perform] well because of the dissent and grumpiness within the caucus... It was difficult to sort of, you know, meld a fine, functioning, high performing team out of a group of people who are generally grumpy with each other. (Barker, interview, 1998)

Even some of the most ardent Clark supporters, while remaining firmly confident in her leadership skills, could not resist being pessimistic about the caucus' capability of overcoming such negativity. Dyson, for example, says that she had doubts about their 'ability as a caucus to move on from the leadership coup' and 'get ahead and get on with it' (Dyson, interview, 1998).

Clark's hindered effectiveness and the low morale of the caucus created a vicious circle, which aggravated each other's problem. With the demoralised and infighting caucus, Clark could not successfully project an image of Labour as a credible alternative Government with convincing and worthwhile messages. As Goff attests:

Whenever a party is seen to be divided it won't do well in the polls because the public think, and I believe rightly, that if the party that can't sort itself out, how can it sort the country out. (Goff, interview, 1998)

In April 1996, the fourth Labour MP, Jack Elder, exited the party to join a third party, New Zealand First which was then enjoying surging popular support in the opinion polls. His departure came as no surprise. As already noted, ranked an unelectable No. 40 in the party list with no constituency, Elder had been an open critic of the direction of the Labour Party for sometime<sup>227</sup>. Together with Moore, Laws, and McCardle, he had been involved in secret talks to set up a new 'centre' political party. His final decision to join New Zealand First came only after Moore's incapability of severing his ties to the party which he once led became obvious<sup>228</sup>.

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<sup>227</sup> In April 1994, Elder resigned as caucus secretary after some MPs accused him of acting disloyally. With regard to his criticism of the Labour Party for abandoning traditional family values, see Elder (1995). For the former party president's direct reply to Elder's criticism, see Street (1995). Michael Laws wrote on Elder: 'He was a former school teacher with conservative social views and a clear belief that the modern Labour Party had gone to the dogs - particularly the lesbian dogs... Like Peter [McCardle], Jack had nowhere else to go [but to join New Zealand First]' (Laws: 1998: 287). Also according to Laws' book, Elder once recounted at a meeting 'how he had alienated himself from Labour's post-election Caucus with Moore's blessing' (Laws, 1998: 285).

<sup>228</sup> Geoff Braybrooke estimates that 'at least eight' Labour MPs would have followed Moore out of the party if Moore had decided to go (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). So, why did Moore decide to stay with Labour? After all, according to Laws, Moore at one stage was proclaimed '99 per cent certain' to depart the party (Laws, 1998: 292). One likely reason is his 'romantic' and 'tribal' affiliation with the party

### Persisting leadership instability

While rumours about Clark's leadership continued, Labour's position in the opinion polls was suffering from the rise of New Zealand First. Under these circumstances, Clark's leadership was discussed in a 'brutally honest' fashion at a caucus meeting on 5 March 1996. At this meeting, Manurewa MP, George Hawkins expressed his dissatisfaction with Labour's poll ratings and Clark's leadership. In Hawkins' words, '[t]here was some straight talking by everyone without fear or favour and we've come to a reconciliation...' (Martin, 1996a). Although one MP was understood to have expressed the view it would be helpful to change the leadership, '[n]o one else was interested in doing the job, so from that point of view it is not an issue', according to another MP, Chris Carter (Martin, 1996a)<sup>229</sup>.

The media speculation over a potential challenge heated up again when a *One Network News*-Colmar Brunton poll result was released on 18 March 1996, which saw Labour plummet to 17 per cent, putting the party second equal with New Zealand First and just 1 point ahead of the Alliance. To fuel this speculation, one senior MP, on 21 March, Jim Sutton (who was touted as one of the potential replacements for Clark) suggested that a leadership change could come within a year:

What is unthinkable is a bloodletting, it's simply out of the question to have a spill. After our recent experience, our experience of the post-93 election, we would say that whatever the situation was at the present time, you know we handled our last change of leadership extremely badly, and the next one, whether it is in 1996 or 2006, has got to be done a lot better. (Laugesen, 1996a)

Clark, however, was determined to fight any challenge against her. In late March she was reported as having said that her earlier comments in which she declared that she would step down voluntarily if she perceived that her presence was damaging Labour's chances to become government were slightly misconstrued. She was now saying that she did not believe that her leadership was playing a part in the party's predicament. She stated: 'I believe I'm doing a good job and that I retain good support in the caucus for doing it, so I'm not running around racked with self-doubt... The truth is, a change could make things a great deal worse' (Herbert, 1996b). Several days later, as the rumour about her leadership position continued, Clark re-stated her intention of not

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(Clifton, 1994b). Braybrooke says: 'Mike was always very bloody reluctant... he is tribal, and he loves the Labour Party. He loves it. And he would have taken a lot of persuading' (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). Michael Laws added: '.. he lacked the necessary desperation and the resolute independence to take that fateful leap; the self-will to breach his fears was absent' (Laws, 1998: 293).

<sup>229</sup> In addition, a political journalist, Patricia Herbert wrote: 'Although she [Clark] invited comments on the leadership at the Tuesday caucus, she prefaced the invitation with a steely speech which had the effect of inhibiting the discussion. Her deputy, the Hon David Caygill, deliberately raised the threshold by asking if anyone was willing to put a motion calling for a formal leadership ballot' (Herbert, 1996a).

resigning without a fight. 'There is nothing to gain and everything to lose from running around like headless chooks'. She went on to say: 'I have no intention of reviewing my options... What I have every intention of doing is strongly promoting policies which I believe will restore a sense of balance and fairness in New Zealand' (Martin, 1996b).

Despite her firm determination, the pressure on Clark intensified with the release of the April *One Network News*-Colmar Brunton poll result which placed Labour on 18 per cent, with New Zealand First as the second party after National at 22 per cent. In an attempt to revive the party's electoral fortune, Clark approached two former and still popular leaders, Moore and Lange, with an offer of a front bench position and a request to participate actively in the coming election campaign, only to be turned down by both (Martin, 1996d).

Although Labour and Clark's unpopularity had been a topic often discussed inside and outside the caucus, as the 1996 election came closer, the nervousness of the worrying MPs noticeably increased. Cullen recollects:

Well... people were meeting each other all the time in caucus, seeing each other every day. People started saying: 'It ain't going to work, is it? We've got a problem, haven't we?' And so it develop[ed] from there. Nothing more than that as I recollect. But then things started to take on a sort of momentum. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

### **The 1996 leadership crisis**

#### **An attempt to return Moore as Leader**

Around this time - approximately early May 1996 - a few frontbench members approached Moore regarding his availability as an alternative leader. Behind this approach was the belief that the presence of a popular leader was a key to avoiding the looming electoral disaster - exactly the same logic applied by Moore supporters (ironically including Clark) back in 1990. Despite his burning ambition to lead the party (and hopefully the country) once again<sup>230</sup>, Moore found this second-time rescue call from his desperate colleagues a surprise. 'Well, I had not planned to take over the leadership... if I had, I would have been slightly more polite [sic], not... such a grumpy prick'. In response, he first had to let his frustration and anger show. His target was Labour's policy direction.

I said: 'You haven't got the guts to do it. Your policies of say, taking tax up and matching the Alliance on promises. That somehow you feel good because you're going to take money off people to help poor people - sounds good but it's

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<sup>230</sup> As recently as late January 1999 - more than five years after his ousting - Moore expressed his aspiration to the leadership role. 'I would like to be Prime Minister of this country. I think I understand a lot of what this country needs, and I've always felt that my base reaction to a lot of issues is similar to the heartbeat of New Zealanders. It is a disappointment (that I cannot be Labour leader) but this is life... what will be will be' (Rentoul, 1999). Wanting to regain the prime ministership is not unusual for former leaders. For example, see David Lange's comment in McMillan (1993: 63).

bullshit. It's not going to work. It'll create more unemployment. You're not focusing on the issues that are facing New Zealand. This is simplistic 1970's stuff, and the globalised economy is just baby talk, it's crazy. Show us some courage. Say 'No' to people'. (Moore, interview, 1998)

After the outburst of anger, he instructed those MPs what procedure would be followed if a leadership change was to be executed.

I said: 'What you have got to do, if you want to change the leadership, you shouldn't do it as Helen Clark did it. What you should quietly do is tell no media, get a piece of paper with all the names on. You bring me a list of names when we have them in majority. Right? And then I think you are obliged to go to the leader and do for her what she didn't do to me. That is say: "Look, you do not have the confidence of the party. Here are the names. We suggest you think about it. [Then] we'll take these names to a caucus [meeting], and the leadership will change.'" (Moore, interview, 1998)

### **Testing the water**

Following this meeting, a few caucus senior members including Phil Goff started approaching their fellow MPs who might have similar viewpoints regarding the state of the party. They also asked them to sign a letter of intent, which expressed their wishes to have a leadership change. Given the party's dismal opinion poll performance in the previous two years, it was no surprise that a number of MPs agreed to the request. Goff reports that the numbers between the pro- and anti-leadership change camps were close:

I think it's fair to say at that time the numbers were evenly divided within caucus. And when I say 'evenly divided' I mean evenly divided. (Goff, interview, 1998)

However, the collected signatures fell short of the outright majority. To illustrate this point, Annette King compares their position with the November 1997 leadership change of the National Party (from Jim Bolger to Jenny Shipley), where a similar technique was employed by the insurgents. Although the actual letter was never presented to Bolger, the Shipley camp claimed that they had obtained enough support to oust the incumbent (Bolger, 1998: 15). This was not the situation for Labour's pro-change group in 1996 (King, interview, 1998). According to Moore, they were 'two short' of the magic figure (Moore, interview, 1998).

Despite the lack of immediate strength to enforce a leadership change, the insurgents remained confident that the figures were under-representing their 'real' position. They estimated that there would be more than enough MPs to overcome the two-vote deficit in their favour when it came to the crunch. Apart from some sympathetic MPs who were overseas at that time (thus could not sign the paper), several MPs were believed to be supportive of their cause although they were reluctant to declare their disloyalty openly. Moore explains the latter:

... there were several people who told me although they wouldn't sign the paper, if there was a vote, they would go for me, but they were too scared of the public



position to go against Helen publicly, but if there was a vote, they would go for me. But they hadn't signed the paper, because they wanted protection. (Moore, interview, 1998)

In assessing the 'real' strength of the insurgents, one point deserves special attention. The letter, curiously, did not bear the name of Moore, or in fact any name of alternative leaders. What it contained was MPs' wishes for Clark to step down from the top position and a vote to be taken to fill the vacancy (Anonymous, interview, 1998). This ambiguity over the alternative raises a question: Could it be possible that those who agreed to sign the letter did so without knowing who would replace Clark? Annette King thinks that could be the case for some.

Oh, I think that would be true. Because it wasn't... the case of 'this person is better than you [Clark]'. It's a case of 'we are in serious trouble. You'd have a [personal] rating of 2 or 3 or 4 per cent [as preferred Prime Minister], and the party has got 15%. We are heading for oblivion. We've got to do something to change it. We believe that we've got to change the leadership, or consider changing the leadership as an option.'... The letter certainly didn't include an alternative leader. I can't remember what the words said, but it didn't say: 'We want to have Mike Moore as our leader.' (King, interview, 1998)

Furthermore, the identity of the alternative leader was not clarified verbally when the approach was made to MPs, either. This was highly unusual. As Larry Sutherland, who found out about the caucus manoeuvring as Junior Whip<sup>231</sup>, comments:

one of the things that I'd asked... was... who they were talking about [as an alternative]. And it was very, very unclear. Nobody would state clearly who it was going to be. Normally the first thing some people want to do is find out where you stand, right? So, there was... not necessarily anybody particular's name [sic] came forward. (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

### **The maintaining pressure on Clark**

In the meantime, the tension within the caucus increased with the release of the *May One Network News* - Colmar Brunton opinion poll result on 21 May. The result confirmed the concerns of those worrying MPs - Labour was losing ground badly. The result which rated Labour at 15% (a three point drop from the previous month) was the worst for the party since Television New Zealand (TVNZ)'s polling began in 1974. Although the governing National Party recorded the lowest rating since October 1994, it offered little comfort. At 35%, National was still in a much better position than its diminishing rival<sup>232</sup>. With the 15% poll rating, Labour was to gain only 20 seats in the expanded Parliament of 120, which means that more than half of the 45 incumbent Labour politicians would lose their seats. To make this grim prospect even more realistic, on the

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<sup>231</sup> He says: '[C]ertain members of the caucus were going around sounding out people, and as a Whip, it [didn't] take long to find that out' (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

<sup>232</sup> The major winner in the poll was New Zealand First which increased its share by seven points.

same day, the Prime Minister, Jim Bolger officially set the next election date as 12 October - less than five months away.

Needless to say, this news undermined Clark's position further. When another poor poll result by TV3-CM Research came out earlier in the month on the 14th, Clark dismissed it as 'pure speculation' ('Clark dismisses 'pure speculation' of poll', *The New Zealand Herald*, 16/5/96). She cited the poll's small sample numbers to discredit the reliability of the result which showed Labour at 16%, dropping 10% from the previous month. However, since the more recently released *One Network News* - Colmar Brunton poll, which had a greater sample number of 1,000, had produced a similar result, Clark was exhausting her excuses.

The May TVNZ poll also dealt a blow to Clark personally; her own rating as 'preferred Prime Minister' recorded a mere four per cent (steady from the previous survey). The popularity gap between her and the leader of New Zealand First, Winston Peters (29%) and the incumbent Prime Minister, Jim Bolger (22%) seemed stark. Moreover, these figures convinced some worrying caucus members of the political necessity for a party to have a popular leader. King continues:

[R]egardless of what we were saying and doing, we were unable to get the party up in the polls, the party was on 15%, Helen was down near the margin of error in popularity. And, as you know, in New Zealand over many years, you've seen a more presidential style election in New Zealand. And so you had to have a leader that was connecting with the public. That was our concern, and we felt that because we were... dropping in the opinion polls, and Helen's credit rating was dropping, that we weren't connecting with the public. And we were looking at the biggest defeat in our history. [It was] seen to be a defeat when Mike Moore only got about 35% of the vote. We were on 15% at that stage. (King, interview, 1998)

Given the party's abysmal poll performance, the two-day annual Party Conference on 25 and 26 May (it was referred to as Congress for the election year) was held in a surprisingly (perhaps artificially) buoyant mood. As one journalist described the atmosphere:

It was almost as if they had come to the congress to give their MPs and each other a much-needed morale boost. And it seemed to work, with MP Judy Keall saying she wished it could go on forever and that she did not have to "return to reality". (Herbert, 1996c)

No doubt encouraged by such a up-beat atmosphere, Clark was eager to seize this occasion to strengthen her position in the caucus by delivering a strong speech. Maryan Street, who retired as the Party President at this conference, explains that through the speech, Clark intended to demonstrate her leadership (and resolve to retain it) to those in caucus who were still questioning and undermining her authority<sup>233</sup> (Street, interview,

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<sup>233</sup> But, why did she have to use the Party Congress to address her own doubtful colleagues? Street explains: 'Well, I think there aren't too many opportunities within the caucus dynamics. There aren't

1999). In the earlier part of the speech, Clark commented on 'what leadership is truly about'<sup>234</sup>. No doubt referring to the state of her own caucus at the time, she said: 'It isn't a matter of style or public posturing. The only measure of leadership is the direction in which we are being led' (NZLP, 1995: 42). In order to live up to that measurement, she used the latter part of the speech to show the party and caucus members a clear direction to follow. Instead of making the usual party conference speech in which leaders merely confirm the already announced policies or broadly discuss the future general directions of policies, Clark went further to announce her 'personal agenda' as the leader (see Chapter 7). In effect, it was a clear statement of: 'I'm the leader. This is what I stand for. This is where we are going to go' (Street, interview, 1999).

However, Clark's spirited speech had little effect on a group of wary, pro-change MPs who continued lobbying in an attempt to strengthen their position. Indeed, their intention became known beyond a circle of parliamentarians at this conference. The then Party President, Michael Hirschfeld, is amongst those who realised this caucus undercurrent during those two days. 'We had started to hear things during the Congress. That's when we first heard' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). The news must have been an ironic reminder of the unstable nature of the PLP leadership for the President. Only six days earlier, he aired the idea of a new leadership selection system by extending voting rights to party members - along the same line as their British counterparts. At that time Hirschfeld made the following comment as if he could have predicted what was to come:

You can't just wake up on Monday to a poll of 500 people that is bad news for the party and rush off on Tuesday [normal caucus day] and change the leader.  
(Martin, 1996c)

Despite the EPLP's apparent distaste for another leadership coup, the resolve of the pro-leadership change group was strong. The series of poor opinion poll results compelled them to act. Five front benchers, Goff, Jim Sutton, Koro Wetere, Michael Cullen, and Annette King, who were all 1993 Moore supporters, continued discussions about the merit of having a new leader. The conclusion which they reached was that the party would be better off with someone at the helm who had wider popular appeal. They also agreed with Sutton's earlier expressed view (in March) that the next leadership

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too many opportunities for a really structured exposé of one's positions. So, what she took was an opportunity to be very clear about what she was intending. And sometimes, putting it out in the public arena has been the best way of conveying it to the caucus. Once it's out in the public arena, there's little they can do about it... they cannot pretend that they misheard, or... they cannot argue with it at the time' (Street, interview, 1999).

<sup>234</sup> In this part, she was referring to the former Labour leader, Bill Rowling, who died prior to the conference. Although well respected for his personal integrity, Rowling - like Clark herself - suffered from a lack of popularity during his leadership. See Chapter 1.

change had to take place in a bloodless and hopefully amicable fashion. To achieve a trouble-free transition, Clark's consent to voluntary resignation would be essential. It was their unanimous view that the next step should be an approach to Clark to ask her to re-consider her position in the best interest of the party and her colleagues. After all, they believed, at the 12 October caucus meeting, Clark herself promised to re-examine her position if things would not improve. By any measurement, the situation had not improved for Labour since. In the sense that it provided them with grounds to raise the issue with the leader, Clark's October pledge at the caucus meeting acted as a 'catalyst' for the meeting.

Nevertheless, the decision to demand self-sacrifice from the leader was not an easy one. Although they became increasingly desperate as the election came closer, their views of Clark in terms of her general leadership were positive. In fact, because of their appreciation of Clark's leadership skills, they had long felt reluctant to take any action about the matter. However, time was running out. As Cullen puts it: 'Well, it was a kind of "needs must" situation, wasn't it?', pointing out that at that stage the prospect of Labour coming third or even fourth (behind the Alliance) in the coming election looked very real (Cullen, interview, 1998). Being the only female MP of the group, King, found the situation particularly difficult.

I, probably out of the group of five who went to see Helen, was closer to her than any of the rest. And... I went reluctantly, and I was personally very emotionally upset about it because I felt guilty that I was broaching the subject, but I knew I had to. So, I felt an obligation but I felt guilty as well. (King, interview, 1998)

### **Clark facing five frontbenchers**

Around 9:00 am on 28 May, Mike Moore, in the knowledge that the five frontbenchers would contact Clark later that same day, sought a meeting with her. The purpose of the meeting was to warn her about the coming approach as well as to tell her his interest in making himself available as a candidate if a vote was to be taken on the leadership. In his words: '...I went and saw Helen Clark because that was the proper thing to do. I was ambushed as leader. I thought that dishonest, so I did it differently.' (Moore, 1996b). He further elaborates:

I went to her, and said: 'This is what you never did to me. This is how it should be done. How it's been done throughout the history of our party. I believe that there are a large number of people who do not support you as the leader.' And I'd have said: 'If there are the numbers there, I will accept the vote. But I would not go out and campaign, undermine you, leak, or do things that are inappropriate. I will act with honour.' (Moore, interview, 1998)

An hour after Moore's visit, the five front bench MPs - Cullen, Goff, King, Sutton, and Wetere - sought a 30-minute meeting with Clark. On arriving at her office, to their surprise, they found that there were four other MPs already there apart from Clark -

Jonathan Hunt (Senior Whip), Larry Sutherland (Junior Whip) and two loyal Clark supporters, Lianne Dalziel and Trevor Mallard. The latter two were asked to be present to provide some support to the leader. As Moore indicated earlier, the five MPs invited Clark to step down in light of Labour's support levels, after reminding her of her own words made in the previous October<sup>235</sup>. Sutherland recalls:

I think their comment was that they were concerned, with respect to... the public perception of the party and who...the leader [was]. That one... senior caucus member in particular whom I won't name... did say that it was felt by that person that the time wasn't right for a female leader, so to speak... and that was one of the reasons given by that person. Generally they applied their own analysis... from their own experiences as to the fact that we weren't going anywhere and that she should reconsider her position to stand down... (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

The meeting was not confrontational or aggressive. In one participant's words, '[e]ach of them [the five MPs] talked why they thought she should step down and then other people at the meeting commented. And that's it' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). The letter for which some of the five MPs collected signatures was not presented. Neither did the delegation threaten a move against her<sup>236</sup>. Goff recalled:

It was a meeting at which we spoke frankly and honestly, as all of us, as members of caucus, have the obligation to do, in terms of the advice we might give to our leader. We made it clear, explicitly, that the reason there would be no leadership challenge was because the Labour Party, at this point in the election cycle, did not need to go through the trauma that such a challenge would involve. (Kilroy, 1996a)

As they agreed, the wishes of those frontbenchers to avoid a repeat of the 1993 leadership coup fiasco were evident. For this reason, they vehemently reject the label of an 'attempted (and failed) coup' for their approach. King asserts:

I don't know what history's done to it, but you've got to understand that the meeting never went in and gave her an ultimatum. I hope that's been told you. We never went to say: 'You've got to go, or else.' It was not... it was not done like that at all. We went along, we sat down, and five of us expressed what our worries and concerns were.

... We did not give her an ultimatum... we exactly asked her to consider her position. (King, interview, 1998)

The central figure of the group, Goff, also says:

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<sup>235</sup> King says: '[I]n fact, ... at the meeting I think it [her comment] was sort of like the lead-in to a discussion with her: "You said at caucus that you would reconsider your position blah, blah, blah."' (King, interview, 1998).

<sup>236</sup> The leadership issue was not discussed at the caucus meeting which immediately followed the approach by the five MPs. The reason for this was that the five MPs had not obtained the nine signatures necessary to call a special Caucus meeting on leadership, and they wanted to pursue the matter only if Clark agreed to stand aside voluntarily. (Laugesen, 1996c)

If I had set out to launch a coup against Helen, I wouldn't have done it in that manner. We were trying to avoid a coup... if it was a coup, I had been around in politics long enough to know how you run a coup<sup>237</sup>. (Goff, interview, 1998)

He further elaborates on their action:

If you are going to change your leadership, and you want to do it brutally, then you don't signal your punches to the person who is Leader. The five people who went to see Helen did so on the basis of thinking that the party was in real difficulty and it was, obviously, in the polls, thinking that a leadership coup was only going to lead the party at the end of it more deeply divided and in greater disarray. But [we] felt that there was a need to talk frankly to her about how the party was doing and what her role in that might have been. So, five of us approached her, and said: 'The polls are awful, and heading downwards. You may be looking at the survival of the Labour Party if the trend in that polling and the longevity of the poor polling was correct. We think that you should consider the issue of the leadership, and whether you feel that you are still the best person to carry this party into the next election'. In that sense, we set out to do precisely the opposite to what happened in 1993. (Goff, interview, 1998)

In hindsight, he admits that their approach to this sensitive leadership issue, which depended upon rationality and logic, underestimated the likely reaction from the Clark supporters.

To have thought you could have a discussion over leadership without being seen as imminently about to challenge her leadership through the ballot process - was that naive? Perhaps. But at the time, given the circumstances we were in, we thought that it did offer some possibility of confronting the problem without making the situation worse. I don't think at that time, I don't think now that Helen ever wanted to be somebody that would go down in history as having led the Labour Party to its final demise. Yet, the situation for us in terms of the public response to us was about that level at the time the discussions took place. There was no guarantee that there was going to be a Labour Party other than as a diminishing rump, had we maintained our voting support at [15]%. (Goff, interview, 1998)

However gently it was put forward to Clark, the request to consider voluntary resignation by the prominent frontbench colleagues was nevertheless an indication of no-confidence on their part. It would be surprising if any leader in that situation was not affected by such a motion. Cullen remembers Clark's reaction to their request.

She... wanted to think about it. I mean, Helen was tremendously upset at that point. She was devastated by the way that the polls had gone, she felt quite rightly that it was a dreadfully unfair reflection of her abilities and her contributions as Leader. She was deeply upset. And yet she decided to stay on and fight for the

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<sup>237</sup> Goff first entered Parliament in 1981 when he was 27. Prior to this, he had been a member of the Labour Party since 1969, experiencing various executive positions. He helped Moore's election campaign in 1972, and once said: 'Mike Moore had quite an influence on me' (du Chateau, 1987: 93). This former university politics lecturer had a remarkable political career in the fourth Labour Government. In 1984, he became the youngest Cabinet Minister (as Minister of Housing) in New Zealand history at the age of 31. By the time he lost his seat in 1990, he had risen to No.7 in the Cabinet ranking as Minister of Education.

leadership. Now, that wasn't a big fight. It was a sort of 'Right, we've talked that through. That's it.' (Cullen, interview, 1998)

### **Questions over the credibility of the pro-change movement**

The controlled manner of the approach in an attempt to avert a messy leadership change had an unexpected effect; the Clark supporters interpreted it as a sign of their weak standing. As Clark loyalist recalls:

... basically, the position was that they were approaching Helen directly to try to make her feel guilty and then go, because they didn't have the numbers to topple her. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

When the shocked Clark consulted with her trusted friends and colleagues regarding her options after the meeting, they also reached the same conclusion and advised her accordingly.

My comment to Helen when she told me that this was happening was: 'They haven't got the numbers. They are trying to stare you down'. She, being Helen, had of course worked exactly that out. And I said: 'In my view, the only choice you have is whether you want to stay or whether you want to go. If you want to stay, you must have the numbers, because they haven't. Because if they had, they wouldn't be doing it this way. So, if you want to stay, you just look at them and say "Where are the numbers?"' (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Another point that gave the Clark supporters the impression of the approach as having no 'realistic chance of success' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998) is the vagueness about the alternative leader. Like the letter of intent which the pro-change group was collecting signatures for earlier, the identity of the alternative leader remained unclear at the meeting. Based upon this, the view was quickly formed by the anti-change group that the other camp did not have a unified candidate behind whom they could unite. Although Moore's name was on people's lips, no confirmation was forthcoming even in the subsequent lobbying. Jonathan Hunt, Senior Whip, remembers the situation and says:

It didn't necessarily mean he mightn't have been the only one interested. You remember that it was more a vote of saying to Helen that she should stand down rather than anybody else should apply. All sorts of people...there were at least two people, who would have been interested, had she said 'Yes' [to the request to resign]. But it's not by any means certain that Mike would have won.

In fact, at one stage the word Mike was used, but that might not have necessarily been Mike Moore. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

The 'other' Mike, rumoured to have set an eye on the leadership position was Michael Cullen. However, his name, like Moore's, remained just a rumour.

So, was Moore 'the' alternative candidate? Or, as Hunt suggests, was there somebody else? Moore himself is adamant that he was the only candidate. In reference

to the fact that his name was not on the pledge paper, he insists: 'Well, there was no doubt about it [his sole candidacy]. That means nothing' (Moore, interview, 1998).

Despite the former leader's confidence, however, Moore's sole candidacy was not a unanimous agreement. At least two members, Cullen and King, were not part of the group which approached Moore regarding his interest in re-gaining the leadership (Cullen, interview, 1998; King, interview, 1998). By the time they started acting as a group of five, the inquiry had been already made to the former leader. King attests that there was no formal approach made to Moore by the group as a whole.

Mike Moore was probably the obvious person to be the challenger. But the group of us didn't formally approach him. There were discussions and meetings and talking and worrying.... I mean, some people obviously spoke to Mike. But... the five of us didn't go and say: 'Mike, will you be the leader?' No, that's not true.

... we never sat down and formally said: 'It's Mike' or 'Take Michael on. Mike'll be the leader.'  
(King, interview, 1998)

Not having been involved in the earlier approach to Moore, King did not have a specific alternative leader in mind. Besides, as far as she was concerned, the purpose of their approach to Clark was merely to express their concerns to the incumbent leader. If Clark agreed to comply with their request, then a search for an alternative would begin, and Moore as Clark's successor was not a foregone conclusion. King acknowledges that some people considered other names apart from Cullen such as Goff and herself, although they themselves were not part of such discussions. Also a possibility was that the Clark supporters would have put forward someone like Steve Maharey as the next leader if Clark had relinquished her position. Thus, when asked her preference in that situation, her answer is non-committal: 'I don't know who would have stood' (King, interview, 1998).

In contrast to King's uncertainty, the other four members saw Moore as the only possible candidate capable of taking over the leadership and, more importantly, of rescuing the party from its predicament. Cullen says: 'There was no question who the alternative was' (Cullen, interview, 1998). Goff is equally clear about his support for Moore.

I ruled myself out - I think I did it on television - from having an ambition to lead the party. Mike Cullen - I don't think at any point during the discussions - thought that he would be put up as a leadership candidate. That wasn't really discussed. The only name that was ever mentioned in the discussions was Mike's [Moore]... Mike Cullen has the ability to be a leader, and may have the ambition to be a leader at some point in the future, but he certainly wasn't under consideration as a potential leadership candidate at that point of time. Nor was there any dark conspiracy between him and I that we should seize the positions of leadership and deputy leadership. (Goff, interview, 1998)



For Cullen, the only unresolved question was in regard to the deputy's position in case Clark stepped down with David Caygill following her. If the No.2 position had become vacant, he would certainly have been interested.

The only issue which arose, the only issue which arose in that context, was that if Helen wasn't prepared to stay as Deputy and in the event of a leadership change, then I was probably the natural choice as Deputy Leader. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Since the leadership primarily occupied the concerns of the pro-change group they did not have anyone specific - let alone a unified candidate - in mind for the deputy's role. Asked whether he had anyone specific in mind for the position, Goff replies that Clark would have been an ideal choice, while doubting its feasibility:

Good question, actually... I don't think we did give a lot of thought to that because the thing wasn't designed as a coup to happen in one day and the decisions to be made on the other... The approach that we made to Helen was one that was designed to enable a healing process after any such change in which case you may have looked to her own supporters or indeed to her if she'd agree to this to fill that position. In fact, I do recall the suggestion being made whether or not it was regarded as realistic, if the thing had simply been a mature discussion among Parliamentary colleagues about the problems we faced and what were the options. And had she been prepared to stand down, would she have been the ideal person for that process to have gone through with a reality and with the public image of having been something that healed the problems in the party rather than fuelled them? Now, to expect her to have done that was that naive? Perhaps. (Goff, interview, 1998)

### **Clark fighting back**

Regardless of its accuracy, the perception of the anti-change group that the opposite side had neither the necessary numbers nor a unified alternative gave them confidence. Jonathan Hunt assessed the situation and concluded that the challenge had little chance of success.

I knew a great deal about what was happening at this time because I had to report absolutely bluntly and fully to Helen about it. And I came to [three] conclusions. One was there were people who were talking. That was obvious. Secondly, no-one had a majority... thirdly while there were some who might have wanted to get rid of her, they did not have a unanimous, alternative choice.

... if you are going to have a successful challenge, first you have to decide who your alternative is. And secondly, that person must be able to get a majority. I was able to tell Helen that at no stage, were either of those conditions ever met. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

Nevertheless, such reassurance did not make Clark and her supporters relaxed. Instead, they decided to go on the offensive. Clark's determination to fight off this latest challenge was most evident in her speech to the Hillary Commission's Women's Leadership Conference held on 8 June - in the midst of the leadership crisis. Not

surprisingly, the speech was full of implied references to the predicament in which she was at that time. In the part where her political career was discussed, Clark said:

... over the years the knockers have never gone away. The key thing is: **Never let them get on top of you.** They represent the past, not the future. At each stage of my career the knockers have come out. And they've been there with a vengeance ever since I became leader of the Labour Party. (H. Clark, 1996, emphasis original)

Later on the speech, she advised the audience on how to cope with the 'knockers'.

Because the knockers will want you to back off weeping, believing that you have nothing to offer and nobody likes you. And in the business I'm in I see regular, ugly attempts to drag people down in exactly that way. I despise and deplore it.

But - never get mad, get even! (H. Clark, 1996)

Then she went on to stress the importance of asking for support from others. She said that although women were not generally good at doing it, there were people - both males and females - who would be willing to help them. 'They will be there for you - if you ask - and you must.'

I count myself very fortunate to have:

- the total and unequivocal support of my family - close and extended
- a solid group of old friends
- and many, many newer friends and colleagues who want to help. (H. Clark, 1996)

Indeed, Clark had a group of colleagues who were prepared to respond to her request for help and fight the battle all the way with her. They decided to employ several tactics. Firstly, to the five MPs further surprise<sup>238</sup>, Clark's supporters contacted the media regarding their approach. As a result, by the end of May, the news was public knowledge. Secondly, knowing that the anti-Clark camp had 16 to 17 votes, not far short of the 21 needed to secure the caucus majority, she and her supporters appealed directly to the external Parliamentary organisation and affiliated organisations for their support<sup>239</sup>. The news about the threat to Clark was certain to bolster her support in the EPLP where loyalty to the leader was always strong. As Goff analyses:

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<sup>238</sup> Goff was bitter about this leak. 'I'm very upset about the way it developed. What was a private conversation with the leader on my part, in the privacy of her room, was maliciously made public, and misrepresented, and comments were made that, frankly, were lies'. (Kilroy, 1996a)

<sup>239</sup> In response to this call, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions came out strongly endorsing Clark and criticising Moore on 6 June. In a press release, it said: 'We were never convinced that Mike Moore had a firm grip on the issues it [CTU] raised, or a comprehensive understanding of what Labour Party industrial relations policy was...Since the 1993 election, this has changed. Helen Clark is a former Minister of Labour. The CTU worked closely with her in negotiating Labour Party's industrial relations policy. She has a precise understanding of all the details of why the ECA doesn't work and what is needed to replace it'. (CTU, 1996)

The political response to that approach was for some of her supporters - some of Helen's personal supporters- to take that publicly to scream 'Coups' at the top of their voice in the sure knowledge that Labour Party members and activists, who were always loyal to the leader, regardless of who the leader is, would then put pressure on some of those people that shared the opinions of the five who went to see Helen. And that's precisely what happened. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Another tactic employed by Clark was to link the five frontbench MPs' approach to two former Labour Cabinet Ministers, Roger Douglas and Richard Prebble. The five MPs' approach took place the day before Prebble - by then the leader of another political party, ACT - delivered a speech entitled 'Why Labour Must Replace Helen Clark'. Because of this timing, Clark described on 3 *National News* (6:00 pm, 31 May 1996) the attempt as 'a bit of last gasp of Rogernomics about the way in which Richard Prebble is behind them'. Although any association with Richard Prebble or his new party was strongly denied by the five front benchers (Kilroy, 1996a), Prebble's speech did nevertheless interestingly mirror what was happening in the Labour Party. For example, he said:

The country cannot afford to lose the experience and intelligence of MPs with Ministerial experience such as David Caygill, Mike Moore, Phil Goff, Jim Sutton and Annette King.

Labour must replace Helen Clark. Some ask with whom? I say, just about anyone would be better - David Caygill or Phil Goff - or really admit they were wrong and go back to Mike Moore (he would be better than Helen!) (Prebble, 1996)

However, Clark's remark is generally seen as nothing but clever political rhetoric. Widely credited for their contribution to the economic reform during the fourth Labour Government, both Douglas and Prebble were highly unpopular figures<sup>240</sup> amongst the party members. Any indication of a potential link between them and the approach was guaranteed to generate public support for her. While acknowledging the fact that the majority of the five MPs might have had rather conservative views on economics, the then President, Hirschfeld, believes that the comment was made for a 'political reason'. '[It was] a very effective way of simplifying the issue and shoring up our [Clark supporters'] position' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). Michael Cullen, who was certainly

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<sup>240</sup> During his later days as an MP for Auckland Central (especially after 1984), Prebble became a target of strong antagonism from some segments of his local party organisation for his enthusiastic support for Rogernomics. (Prebble's Cabinet portfolios included Associate Minister of Finance and State Owned Enterprise.) In an unusual move, his opponents challenged his candidacy in 1988. Since 1996, Judith Tizard has represented Auckland Central, which was once his seat until he lost it at the 1993 election. Tizard explains the state of the local party organisation in 1996: '[W]e had absolutely no organisation here. Prebble had not only burnt the forest, he'd salted the earth in terms of Labour Party activists'. She describes the defeat of her former colleague as 'almost a cause of celebration' (Tizard, interview, 1998). With regard to Prebble's struggle with his party organisation, see Hyde (1994).

not a Rogernomics supporter during the fourth Labour Government<sup>241</sup>, stresses that the implication of Clark's comment that their approach was motivated by ideological factors is totally wrong.

I certainly didn't [have any concerns about the policy direction under Clark's leadership]. And I don't think most people in that group had any serious concerns about policy direction. I don't think... it was ever a fundamental policy issue at all. Generally speaking, you could say that most of those who were inclined to make a change were on the right end of the caucus, and most of those who weren't were on the left, but there was so much interchange and muddy... and any of those differences aren't large in the Labour caucus these days. That really wasn't that powerful-a-factor. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Annette King also points to the fact that none of the five MPs have subsequently suffered any retribution, which should have taken place if Clark's claim had carried any substance<sup>242</sup>.

There hadn't... there was no argument about policy in the Labour caucus. And I think that comment from Helen was a lashing out at the situation... a reaction to a situation because if she truly believed it was the last gasp of Rogernomics, none of us were demoted, none of us received any retribution from her. (King, interview, 1998)

### **Final stages**

The news of the five frontbenchers' approach promptly compelled some of the key Clark supporters such as Hodgson, Mallard, and Tizard to start intense lobbying. At the same time, the anti-Clark members refused to publicly declare their loyalty to Clark and (in particular Goff) continued number-crunching. As already mentioned, this group was conscious of the potential damage caused by yet another public infighting, and that was the reason for opting for a private meeting with the leader. The Clark supporters' leak to the media completely destroyed that purpose. Facing this unexpected development of the event and the Clark camp's fierce determination to fight, the insurgents had to decide on their next move – continue or retreat. They chose to fight on. This decision was a reflection of their confidence that enough colleagues were still in favour of a leadership change.

... I guess if there had been numbers there at that point, there wouldn't have been anything to lose from pursuing the leadership challenge to the final point. (Goff, interview, 1998)

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<sup>241</sup> Lange wrote: 'Michael Cullen is the only active member of the last Labour government who stood up to the juggernaut at considerable personal cost' (Lange, 1999a).

<sup>242</sup> The present Labour rankings are: Cullen (No.2 – Minister of Finance); Phil Goff (No.4 – Minister of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Trade); King (No.5 – Minister of Health); and Sutton (No.6 – Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Trade Negotiations). Wetere retired at the 1996 election.

Two interesting points need to be noted regarding the efforts of the pro-change group. Firstly, throughout this ordeal, Moore himself was absent from direct lobbying. In the spirit of his agreement with Clark at the meeting on 28 May, the former leader refrained from pursuing the top position in a public manner.

I didn't give any interviews. I made no comment. I did one *Holmes* show, and I trebled my poll in one night. You can do that. I mean I could do up 10 [points in the opinion polls] if [I] want. I'll do them [sic] in a week. But I thought the party had been through enough bloodshed, and I had been a bit of shit anyway... Also, I think the leader should be given the opportunity to stand down with dignity. (Moore, interview, 1998)

The former leader decided not to resort to a more certain tactic to undermine his successor, which he knew would be far more effective.

... if you want to destroy a leader, you've got to leak over a period of time. You've got to build up resentment. You've got to build... destabilisation. There was not a destabilisation programme. If you want to do it, and you are ruthless, you destabilise all the time, you make the leader look weak, frightened, harried and harassed, and politically drag the person down. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Secondly, perhaps partly due to Moore's self-restraint, there remained a conspicuous absence of a single alternative candidate - even at this late and crucial stage of the campaign. While Moore was generally seen as the leading candidate, other names such as Cullen still had not been completely ruled out.

Meanwhile, the numbers of MPs for either side reported by the media were not conclusive because both sides inflated them and some MPs promised their votes to both sides. By 7 June, the fate of Clark seemed to have rested upon uncommitted MPs identified in one newspaper as Rick Barker, Mark Peck, Philip Field, Martin Gallagher and Janet Mackey (Herbert, 1996d). Although the two camps were split along similar lines to the 1993 leadership change, some original Clark supporters were considering changing to the pro-change camp as they had no hope of returning to Parliament on current polling indications. To firm up those wavering, the Clark camp continued to encourage party officials to put pressure on them. The EPLP responded swiftly. Hirschfeld explains the role the party organisation played as follows:

... the party's role was to find out, you know, the President of the party's role was to find out what the views of the party are. We invited people and faxes and letters started to pour in. They were overwhelmingly in favour of Helen. It was quite clear that the party didn't not want a change in the leadership. And as soon as the evidence was to hand, we let the party's voice be known to the caucus members. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

The process of the 'let the party's voice be known' involved lobbying individual MPs in the caucus whose positions were believed to be in favour of a change or undecided.

'One or two' wavering MPs were identified, and duly approached by the party officials. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998).

By the end of the week, the momentum of the anti-Clark camp seemed to have slowed and some MPs changed their allegiance. Many MPs were put under pressure from party officials in their electorates, whose help would be crucial in the nearing election. Annette King was one such MP. From being the most reluctant participant of the 28 May approach to Clark, she was reported to have pledged to her electorate not to vote against Clark if there would be a vote on the leadership (Martin, 1996e).

I went to my local Labour Party, called a meeting... and I explained to them how the whole situation had arisen and why it had arisen, and where I stood, and exactly what I had said to Helen Clark. They did not want to change the leader. That was quite obvious. It was also obvious that they were concerned about where we were as a party. (King, interview, 1998)

King was not alone in changing allegiance. The number of those in favour of a leadership change decreased, or in Hirschfeld's word, 'evaporated' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). In retrospect, Moore sees his rather gentle approach as a 'mistake'.

Helen Clark... cleverly and effectively - as she's very good at this - worked on two or three other people and they changed their minds. Some came back wanting their names off the list<sup>243</sup>. (Moore, interview, 1998)

The former leader adds with a hint of regret: 'If I had campaigned it [the final result] might have been different' (Moore, 2000).

Gone with such last-minute change of minds was the confidence of the insurgents in their strength. Now they had to review the situation. Goff says that the final days of intense lobbying tipped the balance towards the incumbent:

It [the media leak] forced it to the point where you'd either have to force the issue to a vote if the numbers were there or simply back away from it. In the end, I think the numbers were too close to call, and after pressure as a result of the publicity, the numbers would have favoured Helen marginally. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Another member of the anti-Clark group is quite philosophical.

It is notorious in politics that if you are going to make an attack on an established leader, you are going to have... some of your 'soft' supporters lose their nerve at the last minute. There will be tremendous pressure put on them... And it was no surprise, really, that in the end [the pro-change group] didn't quite have the numbers.

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<sup>243</sup> Moore must have known that this was possible. In 1980 he organised a campaign against the then leader, Bill Rowling. As happened in 1996, his group collected signatures from fellow MPs who wanted the leader to be replaced. However, again like 1996, under mounting pressure the pro-change group's support eroded. He wrote: 'Towards the end of 1980 I went to see Rowling, taking a piece of paper with the names and signatures of all the MPs who wanted him to stand down. I still have the list and it makes interesting reading because some changed their minds under pressure' (Moore, 1993b: 83).

... we always knew... you know... someone would be saying: 'I want to take my signature off the list'. You know, there were one or two of those who did change their minds along the way. If everybody who did pledge themselves to support had stayed with it, we would have changed the leadership. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

### **The defeat of the leadership challenge**

The possible leadership challenge came to an abrupt end on 10 June, the day before the caucus meeting where a vote had been expected. The five front bench MPs issued a press release under Koro Wetere's name in which they stated: 'We have no desire to prolong the internal debate... All five of us are committed to doing our best to elect a Labour-led government' (Kirk, 1996a). Nevertheless, at the caucus meeting, Clark herself put the issue on the table. Probably she wanted to have a clear resolution to the matter once and for all.

At the subsequent caucus, she challenged anybody who wanted to move a motion to do so, and no-one did. And I'll tell you why no-one did. Because I was able to tell her no-one else had the numbers. And that is a key thing. No-one will move for challenge if they don't think they can win because losing is worse than winning. And in fact, there have been very few challenges by any individual ever since I have been a member of the caucus for 32 years [sic]; I don't think there have been any challenges that have succeeded in that way. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

Despite Hunt's total confidence, (part of) the likely result of the votes if the anti-Clark group had decided to force the issue at the caucus meeting still remains a moot point. On the one hand, there is a general consensus across the caucus that a first vote - which would decide whether there would be a vote on the leadership - would have been rejected in favour of the status quo. As Goff states: 'If we had actually taken it to a ballot, I don't believe that we would have won' (Goff, interview, 1998). Naturally, the pro-change group's final decision not to proceed with the challenge was based on this assessment. 'Certainly there was no point in challenging in the knowledge that there wasn't a majority in favour of it [change]' (Goff, interview, 1998).

On the other hand, there is some disagreement on what would have happened if the first vote had been carried. For example, Moore is convinced that he had secured enough support to regain the leadership if the second vote had been taken.

The test was whether there would be a vote or not, and there were those who... wouldn't vote for a leadership change, but if there was to be a leadership change, they wanted Helen to go. (Moore, interview, 1998)

Michael Cullen is of the same view (Cullen, interview, 1998). He sees a strong resemblance between the 1996 and 1993 situations.

Exactly the same thing would have happened in 1993 if the motion of having a vote had been contested. There would have been three or four people who would

have decided not to vote for a vote. I know that. I know who they are. So, I know exactly who probably would have voted in 1996 if it had come to a vote. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Moore and Cullen's view is strongly disputed by Jonathan Hunt. While he acknowledges the presence of some MPs who might have behaved in the manner suggested by Moore and Cullen, he is adamant that no alternative candidate at any point of time mustered sufficient support to topple Clark. He insists that the Clark camp always enjoyed the majority without those MPs whose support for her was considered unreliable.

There were some people who told both sides they would support them. And I can tell you at least three people were in that category. How they would have voted? I wouldn't have known. I never counted them. I mean one thing you would do is anyone who tells both sides they are going to vote for them, you never count them as one of your supporters. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

In support of Hunt's interpretation of the situation, one of the five frontbenchers, Annette King, argues that the 1996 situation was different from that in 1993. '[T]hat didn't apply in the case of Helen Clark. It didn't apply. I mean there wasn't... enough people [sic] to change the leadership' (King, interview, 1998). (The question as to why some MPs may have been reluctant to force a leadership vote while being prepared to endorse a challenger is to be dealt with in Chapter 8.)

Apart from the likely defeat, another concern for the pro-change group which made them abandon the challenge was the likely close result of the first vote. They were fully aware of the further destabilising effect which Clark's narrow victory would have on her leadership. If she was to win the vote to remain the leader, she needed to win convincingly.

You don't want them coming out even, really, very destabilising. When Bill Rowling was challenged by David Lange first in late 1980, he won by one vote. So of course, the media said he was saved by his own vote. And he was weakened. He was doomed. The party was floundering after that. If it had come to a vote, if we'd forced a vote, we'd probably have lost but we might not have.

... if we'd had a time for a long battle... but we didn't, it would have been damaging. In the end, one side or the other would have won decisively... by three or four votes. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The then Party President, Hirschfeld, argues that the potential adverse impact of such a close result would have been far-reaching. It could have well extended to the EPLP. 'It would've been [of] extraordinary damage to the party structure. The party structure would have been irreparably damaged' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). It is natural that in realising the likely result of the first vote, the pro-change group's focus shifted to the interest of the party beyond the current dispute.



This leadership crisis had one more twist at the end. At the caucus meeting on the following day, Deputy Leader, David Caygill suddenly resigned his position<sup>244</sup>, and was replaced by Michael Cullen unopposed. At the press conference after his election, Cullen pledged his loyalty to Clark: 'My job is very simple. My job is to support Helen as the leader of the Labour Party, to ensure that on October 13, Helen is summoned to be the prime minister of New Zealand in a Labour-led Government'. He was at pains to emphasise that the dispute was now fully over: 'I don't think there is any doubt at all that Helen Clark is the best person to be the prime minister of this country. And the public will see that, come election time. My job is to assist in doing just that'. Cullen even claimed that this failed coup had produced some good: 'Helen over the last few days has performed in the public arena in a way which has been extraordinarily positive and encouraging.' 'Now we go forward to the election as a united party and as one of which clearly has the best policies and the best team' (Smeele, 1996). Clark agreed:

We have the odd difference about tactics<sup>245</sup>, but our views on policy philosophy and direction are identical. I think we'll make a great team... Michael brings tremendous good will into the position with him... I, of course, have my very strong supporters as well. Together we move on now to get this team as a disciplined fighting force to win an election. (Kirk, 1996b)

Although Caygill denied that his decision to vacate the deputy position was motivated by political calculation to resolve the internal division peacefully<sup>246</sup>, the inclusion of one of the critics in the leadership no doubt helped soothe the bitter feelings that had prevailed in the party. Together with the approach of the next election, scheduled on 13 October 1996, Cullen's appointment meant that Clark's leadership was to be secure at least until after the election.

### **Scars of the leadership crisis**

Despite the sudden and non-aggressive ending of the whole event, this latest leadership turmoil left a negative mark on the caucus. In the view of the incumbent's supporters, the approach and the subsequent lobbying was not only a manifestation of the lack of faith in the leader, but also a sign of poor political judgement. As one loyal Clark supporter notes:

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<sup>244</sup> Caygill informed Clark of his intention several days before the caucus meeting. Clark, however, did not pass this information onto Cullen until after he and the other four MPs withdrew their leadership challenge. (Kirk, 1996b)

<sup>245</sup> Asked to elaborate on the differences over the tactics, Cullen replied: 'That's in the past. I'm here to support Helen Clark as leader and that would be a very, very bad way to start being deputy leader of the Labour party'. (Boyd, 1996)

<sup>246</sup> After the resignation, Caygill said: 'No, it is not fair that I claim that degree of heroism. It is my hope that my colleagues will unite behind whoever replaces me, and Helen, and I am confident that they will. But I haven't stood aside so there can be that sort of cleansing or whatever' (Luke, 1996).

I still feel, very angry about that attack on her. What angers me is not that the attack happened, but that a large group of my colleagues' political judgement was so bloody poor. (Anonymous interview, 1998)

Another Clark supporter's criticism is equally fierce.

I like Jim Sutton and, you know, Michael Cullen and Annette and Phil, [but] I don't trust them any more, because the point is that all they are interested in is their electoral result. You know, to me, they don't care about what comes after, and I do. Because one thing that New Zealanders are sick to death of is being told one thing before an election and getting something else dished up to them afterwards<sup>247</sup>. So, I don't trust them. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Negative feelings felt by the Clark supporters also extended to the waverers who considered abandoning the struggling leader. When asked why s/he thinks some MPs entertained the idea of switching the leader, one MP's reply is blunt:

Because they're wimps. Because I think that they thought they might lose their seats, and if we changed leaders, that might win their seats. I think that was about as deep as their analysis goes. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Interestingly but not completely surprisingly, there was not such obvious resentment in the pro-change group. Perhaps the only sign of bitterness shown by this group was towards some Clark supporters' decision to leak the five frontbenchers' approach to the media. Nearly two months after the incident, Goff told a journalist:

I regret nothing that I have done... I think that I should always have the right as a member of Parliament in the privacy of caucus or in the privacy of my leader's room to speak my mind and to give the advice that I think most appropriate... I would always expect that sort of advice to be treated in the same sort of spirit in which it was tendered. It wasn't by some. (Kilroy, 1996a)

Another MP, who was considering supporting Moore at that time, echoes Goff's opinion.

[At the time the five MPs made the approach] we didn't have a sense of direction. We were lacking in formalisation and in momentum and in terms of the people who were going down to see Helen, I mean I didn't have any particular criticism of them. You know, I thought it wasn't a particular foolish thing to do in the face of it. It was, I thought, quite a sensible thing to do - to have these issues out. What made it a problem was that the meeting was deliberately leaked by, I suspect by, well, I won't tell you the name of the person, who I believe who did it, but by someone who was a Helen Clark supporter, and try and turn the whole thing around. So it became a spectacular side show. And it became quite spectacular. I think it was greatly overstated, well it was. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

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<sup>247</sup> This comment may seem ironic considering that Moore was replaced shortly after the 1993 election, which the party fought with him as the leader.

### **The challenge: a catalyst for the caucus and Clark**

Unlike the post-1993 situation, the above discontent felt by both sides did not develop into a situation of constant distrust between the two camps. On the contrary, the overall tension between them eased after the leadership crisis. This is in no small part due to Clark's handling of the caucus in the following period (this is to be discussed in Chapter 7 and 8) as well as other unpredicted events such as Moore's belated acceptance of the frontbench position. Ironically, two unexpected by-products of the leadership challenge helped the long-standing division mend. Firstly, Cullen was at last elevated to the deputy's role. As earlier noted, the animosity between the 1993 Moore supporters and Clark proponents was intensified because of his failure to win the No.2 position ahead of Caygill. Now with Caygill's voluntary resignation, the finance spokesperson obtained the position unopposed. As a consequence, in Cullen's own words:

It meant that someone [ie, himself] identified with supporting Mike Moore in 1993 became deputy leader, so that the two groups in caucus... now saw a leadership that reflected both groups. (Campbell, 1999)

Secondly, Clark and Labour's popularity showed an up-turn following the leadership crisis and it culminated in a strong surge during the election campaign (especially after the televised leaders' debates)<sup>248</sup>. Many Labour MPs - in particular, the pro-change group - believed that the turning point originated in the leadership turmoil in May/June 1996 and in the manner in which the leader dealt with it. In other words, Cullen's comments after his becoming the deputy leader regarding Clark's behaviour during the crisis turned out to be accurate. Goff says:

... one of the ironies of politics was that it gave Helen a second wind and she performed better and the Labour Party performed better after that event. It gave her a profile that actually she hadn't been able to get in the media for quite some considerable time. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Another member of the five frontbenchers, King, thinks that the crisis compelled the leader to change her tactics and attitudes, from which the party and Clark herself benefited greatly.

It acted as a catalyst for Helen Clark herself and she came out fighting. And in fact, you know, if someone had said to us: 'Was it a well planned strategy?' No, it wasn't. But it certainly acted as a spur for her to come out with all guns blazing. And she did, and if you actually track it from that time, you actually saw a change in her approach: she became more aggressive, she became more on the front foot - I suppose - rather than being on defence all the time. And leading into the election

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<sup>248</sup> See Levine and Roberts (1997), p.227. In the event, Labour won 28.2% of party votes and 31.1% of electorate votes. Although the result was the worst in the party's history, it looked significantly better than was predicted before the campaign (Levine and Roberts, 1997: 228). For the analysis of Clark's popularity and the 1996 election result, see Aimer (1997).

campaign, she just peaked, as you know, totally out-shone Bolger in the election campaign<sup>249</sup>. So, she probably wouldn't thank us for it, and she probably wouldn't even agree that that was the case. But it certainly acted as a spur for her personally. And I think perhaps a lot her inhibitions about getting out and getting stuck in went. (King, interview, 1998)

The turnaround for Clark and Labour was no doubt welcome news for all the caucus members. In a way, it provided both sides with a sense of vindication.

In Helen's case, clearly, it has proved something of a make or break experience, ... particularly in the '96 situation. She... thought about things, then she decided to stand and fight for leadership, and did so, and won. It doesn't matter how close it was, she won. And the way she did so, which was done without rancour by and large, I mean people say a few things but politics is politics, without recrimination, without revenge of any sort, I think it actually was the beginning of the turnaround in the public perception of Helen. So, in a funny sort of way, you could argue that both sides were right. Helen's supporters were right to keep her. We were right to put her to the test. Because I have a very strong feeling had it not happened, we might not have done as well in the '96 election as we did, in a funny sort of way. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the development of the discontent with Clark's leadership during the 1993-1996 period. Unlike Moore, whose leadership faced only one serious threat (in the form of the 1993 coup), Clark had to endure a series of potential threats, which generated a constant state of instability. The timing of the 1993 coup left a bitter aftermath. In these circumstances, almost any form of effective leadership seemed doomed from the outset. As it was, a challenge appeared to be an almost inevitable outcome although whether this could have been avoided by appointing Cullen as the deputy leader in 1993 is a moot point. Certainly, the combination of a failed challenge and Cullen's appointment in 1996 proved the catalyst for the more unified caucus.

If the event of the 1996 crisis came as no surprise, what was more surprising is Clark's survival. During the period, Clark did not appear to be a 'successful' leader. The next two chapters attempt to analyse her survival. Once again, the study's suggested theoretical framework provides an analytical perspective.

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<sup>249</sup> Aimer summarised Clark's performance during the 1996 election campaign as: 'In a nutshell, Helen Clark stole the first MMP campaign' (Aimer, 1997: 134).

## CHAPTER 7

### Clark leadership: expectations and concerns

#### Introduction

Why did Clark survive the 1996 leadership crisis? The answer to this question is simple: Clark retained the numerical majority support in the caucus. The question of real interest is *how* she maintained this support, despite Labour and her own constantly poor performance in the opinion polls. After all, even strong Clark supporters admit that the ratings which the party and its leader recorded during the 1993 and 1996 period were disastrous. Steve Maharey, for example, simply puts it, 'those numbers were a killer for any leader' (Maharey, interview, 1998). So, why did her supporters retain faith in her in such adverse conditions?

The analysis in this chapter is conducted in two sections<sup>250</sup>. The first section identifies four variables crucial for the analysis of Clark's leadership. They are: a) her original support composition at the time of her selection as the leader; b) her supporters' expectations; c) her opponents' concerns; and d) her strategic decision. The second section analyses how Clark tried to meet the expectations and eradicate the concerns. An attempt is also made in the second section to explain her leadership survival in 1996 in light of her performance in the above two tasks.

#### Section A

##### **a) Clark's support composition in December 1993**

Outside the caucus, at the party organisation level, Clark had strong constituents in the (trade-union affiliated) left and the women's wing (positioned on the liberal side of the conservative-liberal scale on moral issues - including law and order). Within the caucus, however, her support base at the time of her election was rather different. Four points need to be noted. Firstly, some women MPs did not cast their votes along gender lines; in fact, every female MP who had first entered Parliament prior to the 1990 election (except for Clark) - namely, Austin (84), Keall (84), King (84), Tennet (87), and Tirikatene-Sullivan (67) - aligned with Moore in 1993.

Secondly, as predicted, the moral conservatives in the caucus such as Tapsell, Tirikatene-Sullivan, Geoff Braybrooke<sup>251</sup> (Munro, 1994a), as well as Jack Elder<sup>252</sup>,

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<sup>250</sup> This deviates from the format used in Chapter 4 (3 sections), the chapter directly comparable. As explained shortly, this is because of the similarities between the expectations and concerns associated with Clark upon her selection. The number of sections aside, this chapter follows the format of Chapter 4.

<sup>251</sup> These three MPs all voted in July 1993 against amendments to the Human Rights Act to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Although this was taken as a conscience vote, to which the party whip does not apply, their action drew criticism from the Labour Party Council.

George Hawkins, and Ross Robertson (Clifton, 1997a: 31) unanimously supported Moore. At the same time, Clark failed to attract support from some moral liberals such as Cullen for the reasons described in Chapter 5.

Thirdly, although, as Lange observed, the biggest block of her proponents belonged to the left which constituted about a third of the caucus (Lange, 1995), some moderate/right caucus members also supported Clark. David Caygill, former Minister of Finance in the fourth Labour Government and normally considered right on the economic policies and Jonathan Hunt belonged to this group.

Fourthly, the generation factor seemed to play an important role in determining the camps. Clark's supporters (not only women, as already mentioned, but also men) were largely drawn from the newer intakes who first entered Parliament after 1990. Among this group of 19 MPs, only George Hawkins (90) and Damien O'Connor (93) supported Moore.

Upon her election as the leader, Clark's support composition appeared to be as follows:

Loyalists:	Blincoe, Burton, Caygill, Clark, Dalziel, Dyson, Hodgson, Hunt, Kelly, Northey, Pettis, Sinclair, Tizard, White, Yates
Uncommitted supporters:	Barker, Carter, Field, Gallagher, Lange, Mackey, Maharey, Mallard, Peck, Sutherland, Swain
Opponents:	Austin, Braybrooke, Cullen, Dunne, Duynhoven, Elder, Goff, Hawkins, Keall, King, Matthewson, Moore, O'Connor, Robertson, Sutton, Tapsell, Tennet, Tirikatene-Sullivan, Wetere

The above list forms an interesting comparison to Moore's initial support composition after the 1990 General Election. In particular, two differences immediately become clear. The first point is the number of opponents. While Moore faced very few opponents, Clark's situation was much worse. One may correctly point out that Moore's real support strength was never seriously tested in a vote at that time and thus the number of his opponents may have been 'deflated'. However, it is still true that Clark had to commence her leadership in a more hostile environment than her predecessor did. Coupled with the damaging manner in which the coup was executed, openly declared opposition in a vote (as opposed to potential, unrealised opposition) made Clark's task as the new leader more challenging.

The second difference between Moore and Clark's initial support compositions is the number of loyalists. Clark's winning margin over Moore in 1993 was seven votes

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<sup>252</sup> Elder complained that within the Labour Party, there was 'increasing intolerance of people or views which do not fit with the particular trendy social issues of the day'. He continued: 'To succeed we have to welcome people who are conservative on social issues...'. (Elder, 1995)

(as opposed to Moore's 13 ~ 29 majority in 1990). However, unlike Moore's case in 1990, her support base consisted of a large proportion of loyalists with several uncommitted supporters. As loyalists' support is expected to be reliable and stable over a long period of time, in this sense, Clark was better positioned at the beginning of her leadership than Moore.

Another factor which assisted the new leader's standing in the caucus was some of the uncommitted MPs' support for her, which proved highly reliable. This may sound paradoxical. Indeed it is misleading to categorise all the 'uncommitted supporters' into one group, implying that all of them shared the same (or similar) level of support for Clark. As seen in Chapter 4, some members like Barker were genuinely undecided as to which leader they would support in the vote until the last minute. For this reason, they were 'waverers'. Others such as Lange and Maharey, on the other hand, were unambiguous about their positions on the virtue of the leadership change: they were firmly behind it. Unlike their 'wavering' colleagues, they never considered voting for Moore. So, what was the difference between the loyalists and these 'non-wavering' uncommitted supporters?

The latter (named here 'pragmatic supporters') lacked loyalists' *positive* support, or commitment to Clark. Those MPs supported her mainly because she was 'the' alternative with the best chance to beat Moore. Maharey, for example, openly admits that his knowledge of the future leader was limited at the time of the leadership change and his reason for supporting her was primarily strategic.

I think I supported Helen initially because she was the alternative... I didn't know Helen that well, really. I thought [during] the three years that I had been there, I had much more to do with Mike than I had with Helen. So I didn't know her all that well. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

However, he quickly adds that besides the fact that she was the unified alternative, there were other factors which made his choice 'comfortable' for him.

... I was aware of the fact that for three years, she had been a staggeringly successful health spokesperson, and she was hyper-intelligent. And that combination, I suppose, is what I see as the basis of good leadership. And because I think good leadership is good management, I see the leader as a person who's got a vision, able to communicate it, able to get it across to the public, able to effectively struggle against the National Party, and she had done that, all the way through.

Whether she was 'the' leader or 'a' leader was probably found out in the next little while. But at the time, [I] thought, you know, 'Clearly this is a person who is at the top of the political tree'. So, it felt comfortable. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Therefore, pragmatic supporters were committed firstly to the cause (the leadership change) and then to Clark mostly as its main advocate. While her loyalists' conviction

that she was 'the' best person to lead the party was missing, their support for her had a reasonable degree of reliability and stability, especially in the absence of any other alternative leader. Therefore, it seems more accurate to sub-categorise the 'uncommitted' supporters into two groups as follows:

Pragmatic supporters:

Carter, Lange, Mackey, Maharey, Mallard, Peck, Sutherland

Waverers:

Barker, Field, Gallagher, Swain

So, what were the expectations which her supporters held of her as the new leader? And what were the concerns which prevented her opponents from supporting her?

### **b) Supporters' expectations**

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, Moore's leadership problems were largely identified with his style of leadership (erratic and dominant tendency). What equally contributed to the demise of his leadership was his failure to satisfy the initial supporters' expectations. Apart from the election loss, under his leadership, the relationship between his office and the EPLP hierarchy deteriorated and the PLP could not re-establish itself as a centre-left alternative government.

Under normal circumstances, it seems reasonable to assume that a predecessor's unresolved concerns and unfulfilled expectations are automatically passed onto a new leader as new expectations. This was certainly the case for Moore's unresolved concerns, ie., his problematic leadership style and one of his unfulfilled expectations - re-establishing the party's identity. Upon her selection, Clark was expected to demonstrate better leadership skills and shift the party policies leftwards. However, interestingly, the other unfulfilled expectations under Moore's leadership - re-gaining trust of the EPLP - was not transferred to Clark as one of the expectations. Since the obstacle between the EPLP and the PLP (especially the Leader's Office) was ascribed to Moore himself (and his personality) and because of Clark's proven record as an EPLP loyalist, Moore's dismissal automatically guaranteed an end to this problem. Therefore, in electing Clark, an improved relationship between the two bodies did not feature in her proponents' minds as an expectation. As a result, Clark faced mainly three, inter-connected, expectations. They, once again, correspond to Jackson's three leadership (de)selection criteria:

A. Unity expectation: Provide better leadership

B. Policy expectation: Re-establish Labour's identity as a centre-left party



### C. Elective expectation: Lead the party to victory at the 1996 election

#### Unity expectation

During his leadership, Moore isolated and antagonised a significant number of the caucus members and party officials. As the 1993 General Election approached, the mistrust between them intensified, and the distinction between his 'in-group' and 'out-group' grew. The Clark supporters, most of who belonged to Moore's 'out-group', naturally hoped this treatment of the caucus members would cease under Clark's leadership. In other words, she was expected to show a more inclusive, team approach in the caucus so that it could be more unified. Indeed, according to David Lange's observation, some MPs from the centre and right of the caucus voted for Clark in 1993 against Moore's leadership style and performance (Lange, 1995). This expectation was also held by the other Clark supporters. Describing the new leader as 'meticulously fair', one of her loyalists, Judith Tizard, says that one of the expectations which she had from the new leader was 'better leadership':

I guess I wanted to see people being used for what they were good for and good at, rather than... being excluded for their political views or the perception of their political views. Yes, I wanted to see a much more inclusive party. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Similarly, her supporters expected Clark to provide better leadership skills than her predecessor in other areas such as decision making and presentation of agreed party policies. These skills were believed to ensure that the party's legitimate decision making process would be followed and observed, and once policies and decisions were made, they would be adhered to. Instead of an ad-hoc and 'erratic' approach, which characterised Moore's leadership, it was hoped that Clark would indicate a clear direction to the party and caucus with a long-term plan to pursue. Steve Maharey says that he hoped that Clark would eliminate: 'what appeared to be an erratic, unconvincing approach on policy, and a kind of party which seemed to be run by a very small group of people' (Maharey, interview, 1998). Lange, who voted against Moore because he 'was unstable and irrational', says he expected 'coherence' from the new leader (Lange, 1999b).

Along the same lines, Rick Barker compares the two leaders and makes the following comment:

I would say that... Mike's very head strong and a very strong individual. And I mean he... always liked to do things, he liked to do things the way that suited him best at the time that suited him. I mean that can be a strength, it can be a weakness. But that could be frustrating to people that things could change from day to day, or week to week... Mike wasn't that good on those things. Helen is much better at that. She likes organisation, she likes discipline, and she likes sticking to a plan. So, I guess that there is one key area that I would expect from

Helen be about better organisation in caucus, a clearer view of what was to be done, and a longer term plan and strategy of dealing with it. (Barker, interview, 1998)

### Policy expectation

Clark's better leadership style and skills were also believed to be essential to achieving her second expectation, ie., re-establishing the party's centre-left identity through sound policies, a task unaccomplished by Moore. In Tizard's words: 'I wanted a Labour leader that could deliver Labour policy' (Tizard, interview, 1998). Maharey adds that he hoped:

that we would have a clear-cut, electable policy, that we all could talk about, and feel centre-left about. I'm a social democrat, and I do not want to be in politics to be anything other than that. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

To re-establish Labour's identity as a centre-left party, Clark was expected to produce more clearly defined and coherent policies. It is important to note that, since the majority of her supporters derived from the caucus left/centre-left, 'policy clarification' was understood to involve a leftward policy shift.

So, to what extent did the Clark supporters expect policy to shift to the left? It seems that the Clark supporters' expectations were not unanimous in this respect. The caucus left (as opposed to centre-left) - a minority group of the Clark supporters - preferred considerable policy changes such as repealing the Reserve Bank Act (1989) (Peck, interview, 1998). In addition, they believed that re-establishment of the party's identity needed to include attaining of spokespersonships in key policy areas (such as education, employment, and health) by the left leaning Clark supporters. For example, Maharey, indicated his expectations of Clark in the following terms:

I think she knows that this has got to be a big break, because we may have only a year or two years before we have to face another election. So it [the shadow cabinet] can't be seen by anybody as anything other than fresh. (Campbell, 1993b: 38)

However, the majority of the Clark supporters including the caucus centre-left did not seem to share such an expectation. The selection of Clark and Caygill as her deputy certainly suggested that any policy shift under the new regime would be far from radical (James, 1993b; Morrison, 1993).

In her early parliamentary years, Clark was considered a leading figure on the left, known for her strong opposition to right-wing economic policies which the then Labour Government was eagerly pursuing. In 1986, she stated: 'If this Labour Government fails I think it's the free market economic approach that will get the blame' (Myers, 1986: 170). However, after her admission to the Cabinet in 1987, her position started to change. In terms of the economic policy, she became more fiscally conservative. In

1989, she attributed her earlier view on this matter to her being 'economically illiterate'. She explained:

It didn't occur to us that the resource might not be there to pay for it. I didn't think what confronted this Labour Government was that there wasn't a tap that could be turned on to pour vast amounts of money out. Decisions became a lot harder because you were up against the setting of priorities. It has been a sobering experience for a lot of people, including me. I freely confess to having become a lot more hard-headed. (Munro, 1989: 31)

In other words, by the time she was elected as the leader, it was obvious that Clark was no longer a leading left-winger of the party, but more of a pragmatist - or master of 'the art of the possible' - as Clark has been described on several occasions by the media (e.g., Beach, 1989; Welch, 1990).

Caygill's credential as a potential saviour of the left-wing cause was much lower. While he did not receive the unanimous support of the Clark supporters, the majority of them supported him nevertheless. Together with Richard Prebble, he was an Associate Minister of Finance in the first term of the fourth Labour Government, ably assisting Roger Douglas with his major economic reforms. Also as the Minister of Trade and Industry, he enthusiastically opened up the hitherto protected industries to foreign competition, even at the cost of jobs (L. Clark, 1988). When he became the Minister of Finance, following Douglas' resignation in 1988, he refused to disassociate himself from his predecessor or his achievement<sup>253</sup>. The Reserve Bank Act (1989), which a few caucus left MPs were keen to abolish or modify after the 1993 coup, was passed during his ministership.

Some left-wing Clark supporters acknowledge that Caygill was not their preferred deputy leader because of his 'right-wing' views (Dyson, interview, 1998). David Lange, for example, in the letter which he sent to eight caucus members in the midst of the leadership battle, said: 'We need to become a Labour Party again. That is why I support Helen, and why I support Michael Cullen<sup>254</sup>' (Rentoul, 1993a). At the same time, other left-wing MPs who were in favour of Caygill quickly point to his achievement as the Health Minister<sup>255</sup> including his rejection of corporatisation of the health system as justification for their support. 'He would be far too dry for me on some of the...

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<sup>253</sup> In an interview in 1989, he said: 'We have had to do things that have hurt people, that have impact on the economy and on people, that have added to the recession which would have occurred in any event for other reasons. Those things that produced that result have been necessary, partly because they will ultimately lead to a better standard of living, more opportunities for people' (Booth, 1989: 67).

<sup>254</sup> But, was Cullen a radical left-winger? It was unlikely. In 1994, asked to verify his image as 'the lonely guy, the prime wet who opposed the Rogernomics programme to the last', he replied: '... it's a bit of an urban legend'. Then he continued: 'I was fully in support of the general thrusts of deregulation and competitiveness. What I didn't agree with was, in part, the process... a mentality developed of crash through or crash, and it tended to take over' (Campbell, 1994c: 14).

<sup>255</sup> Caygill was the Minister of Health in the second term of the fourth Labour Government until January 1989.

economic stuff... but on the health system, you know, he was an absolute wet' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). Clark herself expressed a similar view. In an interview, she said: 'Caygill is a person who is dry and pro-market on the economy but not on social policy' (Baysting et al., 1993: 122).

Caygill's victory was one of the keys to understanding the nature of the majority of the Clark supporters' expectations of a 'leftward policy shift'. It seems that what they demanded was 're-affirmation', 'clarification' and 'further re-defining' of the Labour policies that had already been emerging in the previous three years (1990~1993). It embraced the open economy<sup>256</sup> while endorsing the government-provided social services in areas such as health and education<sup>257</sup>. As discussed in Chapter 4, the anti-Moore group was, amongst others, concerned about the former leader's unwillingness to present the party policy in full detail. Otherwise, they were generally contented with the then party policy. It was the *focus* of the party policy, not the content itself, that they wanted to see shift.

The majority of the Clark supporters' lack of interest in a radical policy shift was clear in their expectations regarding the party's future relationship with a potential coalition partner under MMP, the Alliance. At the time of her election, because of the coup's left-wing connotation, many moderate/right MPs suspected that Clark's elevation signalled closer ties with the rival left-wing party. However, although some MPs were sympathetic towards the Alliance's policies<sup>258</sup>, the majority of the left-leaning Clark proponents did not expect the relationship between the two parties to drastically improve. Steve Maharey, for instance, acknowledges his expectation of the relationship to be 'more professionally based in the sense of less... personal animosity' (Maharey, interview, 1998). However, that was where his expectation stopped. Many Clark supporters deny that they expected a better relationship with the rival party at all. One 1993 intake puts it bluntly: 'I didn't expect that for a moment' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

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<sup>256</sup> One of the prominent Clark supporters and left-wing MPs, Ruth Dyson, was reported to have said in early 1994 that the Labour caucus including those on the left accepted the market economy (Edwards, 1994b).

<sup>257</sup> The clear separation between the economic policy and social policy, and refusal to fully extend the liberal economic doctrine to the latter was evident in Caygill's following comment made in 1988. 'I can favour deregulation in relation to industry, the reduction of protection, because I think protection is inefficient and because I think it is unfair. I dislike import licensing as much because I see it as a monopoly in the hands of the few and because I think it imposes costs unnecessarily. But in relation to health, the justification for a degree of protection, specifying a standard, is much more obvious.' 'It puzzles me that anyone would expect you would behave the same towards patients or hospitals or health care as you behave towards industry' (L. Clark, 1988: 32).

<sup>258</sup> For example, David Lange wrote in an article in which he criticised the Alliance's decision to support National after the 1993 election: 'This isn't to say that I don't agree with some Alliance policies (not the wacky transaction tax but the Alliance can have my vote whenever it wants it for remodelling of the reserve bank act to take account of the employment target)' (Lange, 1994b: 68)

Judith Tizard adds: 'I had no expectations of a better relationship with the Alliance. What I had hoped was that a Labour Party, clearly articulating a Labour view of economic and social policy, would actually beat the Alliance' (Tizard, interview, 1998).

Given the moderate nature of the expected policy changes, David Caygill was quite relaxed about his new role as the deputy leader. This was despite his awareness that the new caucus would require symbolic separation from the controversial 1984-1990 era during which he played a pivotal role in the Government. He was of the view that such a move was politically necessary.

I believed that it was necessary to mark some degree of change from the 84-90 Government, that was by the end, a politically unpopular Government. For all that I believed we needed to do the things that we did, from tax reform through to privatisation, I had no wish to dissociate myself from those decisions, but I thought it was time to move on. I used to say that the decisions we had taken then were appropriate then, but that didn't mean that there was any need to repeat them, you know, or to go back to them. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Despite his association with the fourth Labour Government, Caygill refused blind pursuit of the orthodox economic policy. His belief in the government's positive role in the economy as a means to achieve a just society was more than in tune with Clark and her supporters' positions.

... the economic policy is not the end in itself. You don't want a strong economy for the sake of the kudos that the country might get, though there are some benefits in that. You want it because of the advantage that a strong economy can confer in terms of not just higher living standards but more equal living standards. There is, in my view, a distributive responsibility in government. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

With regard to the ideological difference between himself and Clark, Caygill points to her preference for higher taxes, but quickly adds: 'that wasn't... a policy disagreement that I regarded as fundamental' (Caygill, interview, 1998).

For Caygill, the leadership change was important not only because of Clark's superior leadership skills but also her interest in 'social issues' as opposed to Moore's interest in 'the business side of politics' (Caygill, interview, 1998). The new leadership indicated Labour's intention to renew its emphasis on social policy areas without changing its support for the fundamental economic framework installed by the fourth Labour Government.

### Elective expectation

Although implicit at that time, like any leader of a major political party, Clark was nevertheless expected by her supporters to lead the party to victory at the 1996 election. As discussed in Chapter 3, during the leadership battle, the newly introduced MMP system was often cited as a powerful factor for the change as she was hailed as better

suited for the new system than Moore. Put simply, if the anti-Moore camp had thought that Labour's electoral fortune would be jeopardised by Clark, she would not have received their backing. Moore's problematic leadership style and his presentation of the party policy, all of which Clark was expected to rectify, were seen as detrimental to the party's election chances. Maharey asserts that he became concerned about the public perception of the party as a whole being tarnished as 'erratic' under Moore's leadership. Combined with Moore's exclusive leadership style, he judged that Labour's prospect of becoming government with Moore at the helm was grim. Clark, in contrast, seemed to offer a better chance at governance. Asked what he expected from Clark at that time, his reply again emphasises his desire to win the Treasury benches:

I can remember [wanting to] be in government, I've never been shy about that. I *did not* come in to be in opposition. So, my ambitions, I suppose, were that we would define ourselves, [run] a successful party, and get into power. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

### **c) Opponents' concerns**

As seen in Chapter 5, the 1993 Moore supporters' reasons for backing him were six-fold: 1) Labour's better than expected performance at the 1993 election; 2) personal obligation/loyalty to Moore; 3) the left-wing connotation of the coup; 4) Moore's high public popularity; 5) the lack of sufficient knowledge about Moore as the leader; and 6) the timing of the coup. Not featured in this list were concerns about Clark as a potential leader. On the contrary, it seems that there existed strong admiration for her leadership abilities among the Moore supporters. For example, Peter Dunne, a reluctant Moore supporter, says:

At a personal level I have nothing but the highest regard for her, her abilities, her consistency, and her strength. (Dunne, 1999a)

However, there were three concerns which they held at that time - two were related to the image of the coup as being left-wing driven, and the other was regarding Clark's election winning ability. They were essentially mirror images of the Clark supporters' expectations.

### Unity concern

Firstly, the anti-Clark group were concerned about the opposing side's possible retaliation through a shadow cabinet portfolio allocation. The caucus infighting during the leadership struggle was so intense that the atmosphere of the PLP was far from conciliatory. The temptation for the victor to punish the opposing side appeared real. Besides, it was known in the caucus that some of the Clark supporters prepared lists of a potential cabinet line-up with some crucial portfolios being occupied by their group

members<sup>259</sup> (Austin, interview, 1997). A Clark supporter, Richard Northey, thinks that this concern might have entrenched some of the Moore supporters' attitude against the coup.

...I think some of those people may have felt that [if] Helen Clark became Leader, she would be punitive and would promote her supporters at their expense even though they had supported her, she would get more left-wing people. So it was partly about self-preservation. (Northey, interview, 1998)

Indeed, a Moore supporter, Annette King, when asked about her own loyalty to Clark's leadership upon election, replied: 'The answers given by Helen that she intends to use the talents of all members - will be judged on the way it [the new shadow cabinet] is put together' (Stone, 1993d). Damien O'Connor, the only 1993 intake who supported the former leader, admits that he was initially concerned about the prospect of the Clark supporters dominating the shadow cabinet.

... I knew that a balance of senior members within the party would ensure we continue the sensible policies. And to remove all the senior members, many of whom would have been perceived to be on the right, would've been just disastrous. (O'Connor, interview, 1998)

This concern, however, was not universally shared among the Moore supporters. For instance, one MP says:

I wasn't really concerned about [it] - about the [shadow] cabinet... portfolios... I didn't think my own portfolios were threatened. It was pretty obvious what portfolios people wanted me to take and that I think whether it was a left wing or right wing leader, I would probably still get them. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Phil Goff had the same view. He argues that rewarding her supporters at the expense of competent and able MPs who favoured Moore at the vote was politically unrealistic.

In terms of rewarding her supporters, I don't think realistically, any leader can afford to put a section of the party that is competent on to the backbenches because of the ideological views they might hold. (Goff, interview, 1998)

### Policy concern

Secondly, there were uncertainties about a 'leftward policy shift' which was expected to take place under the new leadership. As discussed earlier, because of the high proportion of the caucus left among the Clark supporters, some caucus members believed that the 1993 leadership change was ideologically driven by those who desired to move

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<sup>259</sup> According to Richard Northey, those lists contained members from both camps. However, they had a 'different balance of people' between them, more in favour of the Clark supporters than the actual allocation in December. Those extra Clark supporters were ear-marked for social policy portfolios. (Northey, interview, 1998)

Labour's policy to the left and to narrow its targeted voters. For instance, Peter Dunne notes:

I think that the leftward group did want to see things like the Reserve Bank Act. changed, the whole commitment to an open market economy turned around, and Labour generally do much more to 'out-alliance' the Alliance. (Dunne, 1999a)

Shortly after Clark's election, Phil Goff warned against any radical policy shift under the new leadership: 'I have devoted all my adult life to the principles and policies of the Labour Party... I don't intend to change that but it needs to be a Labour Party that reflects the hopes and aspirations of the people I represent' (Stone, 1993d). He also expressed his concerns about Labour's potential move to abandon wide political appeal and target a narrower electorate under the new electoral system:

Narrowing the political focus is always a risk for any political party, and I would hope that people with the intelligence of Helen Clark, David Caygill and Maryan Street would avoid following the path of some of our political organisations overseas, which have excluded themselves from office. (Munro and Laugesen, 1993: 2)

Dunne reports that his concerns over the anticipated policy shift was 'shared by many of the moderate and right-wing Labour MPs' (Dunne, 1999a). However, some Moore supporters argue otherwise. They say that they were philosophical that some form of policy shift (although not radical) under the new leadership would be inevitable as a natural 'cycle' for the party.

Well... I knew there would be a policy shift. I believed there would have been some realignment of policy regardless of the leadership. There was a lot of pressure from grass roots membership of the Labour Party to move to the left. And to some extent, I regarded that as inevitable. It's a part of the cycle in Labour. When you are in government, you become more pragmatic. You sort of get confronted with the realities... So, that was not my major concern although I mean, I'm prepared to argue for what I believe in, in the caucus whether I turn out to be on the left or on the right of the argument. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The view that a radical policy shift would be unlikely was especially strong amongst those who had known Clark for a while. The selection of David Caygill as the deputy leader worked as further assurance<sup>260</sup>. The following comments made by Goff, who warned against narrowing the political focus, illustrate this point. Furthermore, they underline that if the Clark opponents had any doubts over Labour's future policy direction, it was due to her supporters' perceived views and not those of Clark.

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<sup>260</sup> Because Moore's policy stance came under strong criticism during the 1993 leadership change, the selection of Clark, and especially Caygill, raised questions as to the authenticity of the rationale (King, interview, 1998).



Helen is before anything else pragmatic. She understands having been in politics as long as I have and having taught politics before that as I did<sup>261</sup>, the realities of the political scene and that moving the party to the left was not the answer to Labour's bid for power...

... One could never have accused David Caygill of being likely to lead the party to the left. David is a centrist, he has economic knowledge and ability, as Helen does, to know that the solution does not lie in the direction such as that proposed by the Alliance. Helen had been a Minister, she'd had to make hard decisions, she had been willing to make the hard decisions. So, I had no great fear of a major swing to the left as it were, though some of her supporters with lesser ability than I would have ascribed to her, would've clearly moved in that direction. (Goff, interview, 1998)

The different level of anxiety towards a likely policy shift reflected each MP's own ideological position. Like the caucus left/centre-left, the caucus moderate/right encompassed varying policy views. For some MPs like Dunne, Austin, and Clive Matthewson, whose natural inclination was towards centre-right of the political spectrum, any policy shift to the left was undesirable. For the majority of the group, on the other hand, some degree of a leftward shift could well be accommodated.

#### Elective concern

The third and probably the most serious concern held by the Moore supporters was linked to their fourth reason for supporting him, listed above. Although Labour failed to win the 1993 election, Moore's personal popularity was never in doubt. As pointed out in Chapter 5, Clark's personal popularity never matched that of Moore's. Those who were prepared to support Moore despite his shortcomings had serious doubt about Clark's ability to make the party popular with the public. Their concern was further reinforced by the huge public backlash witnessed during the 1993 leadership change<sup>262</sup>.

#### **d) Clark's strategic decision and the urgent need for party unity**

As was the case for Moore in 1990, there were few *real* conflicts between her supporters' expectations and her opponents' concerns, which Clark had to deal with. The biggest and most imminent problem facing the new leader was the highly divided

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<sup>261</sup> Both Clark (1973-75 and 1977-81) and Goff (1975-79) taught politics at the University of Auckland.

<sup>262</sup> One may ask how the Clark supporters felt about her unpopularity. Although none of the group denies the importance of having a popular leader, they were optimistic about Clark's future performance at the time of the leadership change. Mark Peck's view is typical. Asked whether he was worried about the matter, he replies: 'No, not at the point. It didn't. No, 'cos I mean the way I looked at it was that it's like any leader, eventually you will come up in the polls. I always believed in the maxim that a week is a long time in politics. And I thought, you know, give Helen a few months in the job, and a clear run at the Government, and we would be fine' (Peck, interview, 1998). Furthermore, one MP saw it as an advantage upon which the party could build on. 'I said that low ratings three years out of an election are excellent. It's much easier to go up one percent than it is to maintain a very high leading in the polls. So, they don't actually bother me' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

and volatile state of the caucus. As already illustrated in Chapter 6, there were profound ill-feelings and suspicions between the 1993 Moore supporters and Clark supporters. Under these circumstances, careless handling of expectations and/or concerns could further aggravate the already threatened PLP unity. A leftward policy shift which was expected by the majority of the Clark supporters was within the acceptable range by most of the Moore supporters. However, because of the lack of trust (and communication) between the two sides, there existed a certain degree of anxiety within the latter group in this regard. Given this situation of profound mistrust between the two camps, Clark was highly aware that even the slightest hint of mishandling of those matters would exacerbate the internal divisions. The political consequences of that would be costly both for herself and Labour at large. As Street notes: 'she was very careful on the dynamics of that very tender, bruised caucus' (Street, interview 1999).

However, it is important to note that there was potential for *real* conflicts between the expectations and the concerns regarding the pending policy shift. Minorities on both the left and right upheld firm policy stances which were simply not compatible<sup>263</sup>. An attempt to satisfy either position would surely alienate not only the other minority group but also many of the majority MPs. For example, any radical attempt on the Reserve Bank Act was likely to be met by strong resistance by some in the caucus (including Cullen, Caygill and Clark herself). Another likely contentious issue was taxation. A few caucus right/moderate MPs' obstinate opposition to any income tax increase was well known, while many of the caucus left seemed to favour a tax increase in order to fund more social services. Conversely, if Labour accommodated the minority right's view that no policy leftward shift was desirable and the party's centre orientation should continue, dissatisfaction from the left/centre-left would be inevitable. Similarly, some Clark opponents kept a close eye on the first shadow cabinet portfolio allocation, which the left Clark supporters believed should be used to signal the new centre-left identity for the party.

Given the diverse and contradictory policy views in the caucus, one might wonder whether Labour could have achieved the expected policy shift to every MP's satisfaction. Lange, who was one of the minority left-wing MPs, concluded negatively:

If such differences [on the positions on the Reserve Bank Act and taxation] in the Labour Party are merely the result of uninformed prejudice, we may yet be reconciled. But if our differences arise from deeply-held philosophical convictions, they are beyond resolution. They are not matters of detail, easily traded off. Left unsettled, they lead us inevitably to a manifesto so lacking in specifics as to be meaningless. (Lange, 1994a)

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<sup>263</sup> It is interesting to note that a number of Labour MPs during 1993 and 1996 - including Clark, Moore (McLoughlin, 1991: 54), Maharey (1997: 39), Dunne (McLoughlin, 1991: 57) and Goff (McLoughlin, 1995: 119) - have at some stage identified either themselves or the Labour Party as 'social democrat'.

One of the minority right-wing MPs, Peter Dunne, who disagreed on many issues with Lange, was an unlikely ally on this matter; he was reported to have wondered whether any compromised economic policy between the opposing sides would be in the best interest for the party in the long-term (Edwards, 1994a).

Even the then Senior Whip, Jonathan Hunt, who normally strongly denies the validity of the left/right labels for Labour MPs, admits that there were some exceptions. For those 'extreme' MPs, according to Hunt, the option was either to adopt the majority position or depart the party.

Those terms [left or right] are used by supporters and opponents, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they are true.... There are a few people right at the extremes on both sides, who probably like to see themselves as that. But they always accept the caucus position or else they leave the caucus. (Hunt, interview, 1998)

Indeed, the likelihood of some MPs' departure looked strong at the beginning of the Clark leadership<sup>264</sup>. Due to the uncertainty incurred by the introduction of the new electoral system, together with the reduction of the 'local' constituency numbers from 99 to 65 (which necessitated major boundary re-drawing), many Labour MPs engaged in talks of potential defection<sup>265</sup>. In particular, MMP, which was predicted to greatly increase representation of minor parties in Parliament<sup>266</sup>, appeared to have a profound impact on the two major parties' internal unity. For example, Richard Mulgan, a member of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System, which recommended the introduction of the new electoral system<sup>267</sup>, commented in 1994:

It is not clear whether the major parties will survive in their present form or whether they will split into smaller rival parties once they have lost the incentives to remain united for electoral purposes (Mulgan, 1994: 219).

A former Party President, Maryan Street, explains the breadth of the Labour caucus' ideological views under the old electoral system as 'broad church', containing from 'un-reconstructed Marxists' to 'neo-liberalists' with many 'social democrats' in the middle

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<sup>264</sup> However, Maryan Street argues that she did not expect a large number of defections. 'I didn't think the likelihood of that was very great. I thought there might be a few who would go. But most of them knew that they were where they were because of the Labour label. They would not have been there had they not had Labour after their name. The most honest ones admitted that quite freely. But the others recognised that grudgingly as a truth' (Street, interview 1999).

<sup>265</sup> For example, a political journalist reported in August 1994: 'Around 30 constituencies will be abolished in preparation for the new MMP Parliament. It is expected that this will finally trigger the movement of several MPs to "list" parties like the Alliance and Roger Douglas' ACT', adding, 'Mr Maharey agrees there have been problems in keeping the Right and Left happy, in policy terms. This, he says, should sort itself out when the dust from the new boundaries settles' (Rudman, 1994).

<sup>266</sup> See, for example, Palmer (1992), Chapter 8, and Gustafson (1993).

<sup>267</sup> See the Royal Commission on the Electoral System (1986).

(Street, interview, 1998). However, as Mulgan noted above, the arrival of the new electoral system was believed to change the dynamics.

... with the emergence of MMP, people were at greater liberty to carve out a political niche for themselves that better reflected their politics... And so the pressure, then went off the internal workings of the Labour Party, because the Labour Party was then able to re-group and say: 'Yes,... we are of the social democratic tradition. We're social democrats, that's what we are.' (Street, interview, 1998)

It appeared that Clark's decision was to prudently meet her supporters' expectations in a manner which would not unnecessarily alienate her opponents. Clark's primary concern seemed to be retention (or restoration) of the unity of the PLP. Unlike her National counterpart, Jim Bolger (Laugesen, 1994f), Clark never openly encouraged desertion from the caucus ranks<sup>268</sup>. On the contrary, she seemed to be determined to prevent or minimise any unnecessary losses of her colleagues.

Since the caucus' ideological diversity was so great, a loss of some MPs from the right as a result of a necessary leftward policy shift was considered inevitable<sup>269</sup>. At the same time, Clark recognised that shifting the party policies to the degree which would satisfy the leftist supporters would not be politically viable. In a new, unpredictable political environment, such a radical lurch might drive many moderate/right MPs away from the party. A further clarification and re-definition of the existing party policies might not be sufficient to retain some left-wing MPs' support, but that was the only path for her to take.

## **Section B**

### **Meeting expectations and dealing with the concerns**

Since there was a considerable overlap between the Clark supporters' expectations and her opponents' concerns (ie., better leaderships - biased shadow cabinet portfolio allocations; the level of the intended policy shift; and winning the election - Clark's lack of popular appeal), the manner in which the new leader handled both expectations and concerns are examined together below.

#### **A. Unity expectation/concern: provision of better leaderships**

From the outset, Clark was determined to establish a clear and reliable leadership style, making a notable departure from Moore's style.

In an early 1994 interview, she boasted that she had replaced Moore's unfocused, long, and rambling debate with a more formal, business-like approach. Also, on her

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<sup>268</sup> However, after the Selwyn by-election, she commented seemingly out of frustration with the on-going infighting: 'We're at the point where if people want to go they should go' (Stone, 1994).

<sup>269</sup> Michael Cullen, for example, said in Parliament on 16 March 1994: 'I will regret the leaving of any of my colleagues -some, I have to say, more than others - should they choose to go' (NZPD, vol. 539: 432).

insistence, issues were now first examined by caucus committees 'to iron the wrinkles out'. Following that, briefing papers were made for each MP before the same issues were discussed at a full caucus. As a result, Clark was reported to have said that Labour was not 'the party of default any more' (McManus, 1994). At the same time, with the help of business experts, the party had introduced a strategic plan consisting of six corporate objectives, each of which was reported on regularly (Smith, 1994: 29).

The new leader's effort was immediately recognised as successful by her supporters. Her public performance was austere, solid and reliable, which was a breath of fresh air after Moore's often brilliant yet unreliable style. As one Clark loyalist puts it:

... you'd never have to hold your breath before she opens her mouth. You always know she is going to say something,... that's spot on. So, that's been a big plus. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Rick Barker was also impressed with the new leader.

Helen's pretty good. Helen's got a clear view of what she wants to do. She's energetic. She's hard working. She's a good communicator... Organised, disciplined, and she leads from the front. I mean she doesn't expect others to work harder than her. She works as hard as anybody else. Sets high standards. And expects other people to follow suit. (Barker, interview, 1998)

At the caucus meetings, she was also willing to show a clear direction for the caucus to follow. As Jill White explains:

I think that she is decisive. I also very much in caucus enjoy the way she is able to take in a wide range of perceptions and views from caucus members and then at, a sort of, an important point, say: 'Right. This seems to me to be the way forward.'... Now, it isn't very often that caucus does not agree with the way forward that Helen perceives. That's to me a very, very good skill in managing a group of people who all do want to get to the same place, but who can have quite different points of view that they want to express, and want to express quite vigorously. (White, interview, 1998)

In 1994 Maharey was reported to have pointed to three positive consequences of Clark's new leadership style: more efficient running of the caucus; clearer understanding of the leader's expectations of the caucus members; and a removal of personalities from caucus debate (Edwards, 1994c).

In order to restore unity in the seriously divided caucus, an even-handed style of management was essential. If she was intent on consolidating her position by converting the 1993 opponents to new supporters, she needed to prove that they were not disadvantaged under her leadership. Thus, the 'inclusive' approach, she often referred to, featured very strongly in her leadership. She did not need to wait for long to put that style into practice. The first shadow cabinet portfolio allocation presented her with an ideal opportunity.

Although being acutely aware that her 'support base was within the intakes of 1990 and 1993' (Campbell, 1993b), she was prudent not to isolate the Moore supporters, many of who had rich Parliamentary experience and expertise. Their exclusion from crucial portfolios and the front bench would not only have deepened the existing divisions within the caucus but also heavily eroded the party's credibility as the alternative government. In October 1994, she explained her personnel policy: 'There is a job for everyone and my role's been to try and assist everyone to settle into a role that's supportive of the group' (Smith, 1994: 28). On the importance of maintaining the fragile party unity, she said.

My way of dealing with that [the possibility of the PLP flying apart after the 1993 coup] has been to be reasonably tolerant of diversity and to try to include everyone in what is done. And that has been overwhelmingly successful. (Smith, 1994: 28)

As discussed in Chapter 6, the announced line-up delighted the wary Moore supporters<sup>270</sup>. For instance, Jim Sutton (ranked No.13) stated at that time: 'I think she has obviously been guided by experience and talent rather than loyalty considerations, and I think it is an excellent move to get the party back together again' (Clifton and Kilroy, 1993). David Caygill, says that the decision, which was made 'ultimately' by Clark after consultation with him (Caygill, interview, 1998), Hunt, and Cullen (Hunt, interview, 1998), was designed to appoint people 'on their merits' against a natural temptation to reward her own supporters<sup>271</sup> (Caygill, interview, 1998).

Clark's determination not to exclude her opponents was most obvious in her willingness to accept Moore's return to the frontbench.

... Helen talked to a lot of us about the fact that she wanted to bring everyone back together again... that she wasn't going to exclude Mike regardless of what he did... that when he was ready to come back, the door would be open. And you know, a lot of people said that would be seen as weak, and she said: 'Tough'. She was going to do it anyway. She wasn't going to seek revenge on him for the way he'd behaved, that she was going to include people who had been strong supporters of Mike, you know, her whole style was very clearly laid-out. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

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<sup>270</sup> A Moore supporter, Margaret Austin reports that her successful retention of the education spokespersonship in the reshuffle had to be fought hard: 'I... said [to Clark and Caygill at a meeting prior to the portfolio allocation that] I knew that I was under threat, but education had been my life and I wanted the education portfolio... I also indicated to them at that meeting that retaining the education portfolio was exceedingly important to me; whether I was on the front bench of the Labour team in the House [or not] was of no consequence to me. And in the end, I retained the education portfolio and moved to the second row, which suited me perfectly well.' (Austin, interview, 1997)

<sup>271</sup> Asked whether he thinks Clark wanted to promote her supporters ahead of her opponents if she could have, Caygill answers: 'Yes. Yes, I think she would've liked to do that. I think she would naturally have wanted to reward people who had helped her and who she wished to encourage. But I think it was a matter of striking a balance, and also of recognising ability and experience' (Caygill, interview).

The first shadow cabinet portfolio announcement was generally well received and appreciated inside and outside the caucus, by both her 1993 supporters and opponents. The then Party President, Maryan Street, who observed the caucus from within, said: 'She's uniquely good at binding the caucus together as a team... With two exceptions, both former leaders with their own agendas... She'd tried to be inclusive, and she's succeeded, particularly on the front bench where she's put a wide range of people because she believes that the broad range of people in the Labour Party should be represented. If you weld together a team that behaves like a team, then you've got all the components that appeal to our constituency' (Roger, 1996: 54). Elsewhere, Street also said:

I think a number of people who didn't vote for her in the leadership change have been pleasantly surprised at her inclusive approach, her genuine team approach, rather than the kind of rhetoric we used to hear from the leadership about team approaches, which never in fact materialised. (Munro, 1994b)

Clark's 'inclusive' approach did not stop at the shadow cabinet portfolio allocation. Until mid 1994, Clark's supporters continued to meet as a group regularly (approximately once a month) outside caucus meetings. Those meetings, which originated in the middle of the 1993 leadership challenge, had two purposes. Firstly, they provided the new leader with 'psychological and emotional support' at the personal level. Secondly, the meetings were used as a forum to discuss 'strategy about issues', and 'develop policy ideas' before full caucus meetings. In the spirit of 'inclusion', Clark requested these meetings, which were normally attended by twenty MPs<sup>272</sup>, to discontinue. Her reason was that they might look like a faction, and that she wanted the caucus to work as one entity (Northey, interview, 1998).

Clark exercised the same principle in her running of the caucus meetings. One MP describes her style in this regard as 'consensus leadership' (O'Connor, interview, 1998). Unlike Moore, who had been accused of being dismissive of opposing views, she allowed her opponents including Moore 'as much as speaking time as they wanted' (Northey, interview, 1998) in discussions. Apart from the opinions of spokespeople on issues in their specialist fields, views were frequently sought from a wide range of the caucus members (O'Connor, interview, 1998).

Clark's conscious effort to unite the caucus was manifested in a public manner as well. An example was found in the fiasco over the selection of the Labour candidate in the re-drawn Mangere seat. Prior to the selection for this safe Labour seat, the retiring incumbent, David Lange, was publicly endorsing the then Service Workers Union

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<sup>272</sup> The attendees were: Barker, Blincoe, Burton, Carter, Caygill, Clark, Dalziel, Dyson, Kelly, Mackey, Maharey, Northey, Peck, Pettis, Sinclair, Sutherland, Swain, Tizard, White, Yates. Hunt declined to attend them, citing his position as the Senior Whip. David Lange occasionally participated. (Northey, interview, 1998)

Secretary, Mark Gosche, as his successor. The problem was that the new boundaries affected two neighbouring incumbent MPs, Philip Field (for Otara) and Ross Robertson (for Papatoetoe), whose electorates and Mangere merged into two new seats, Mangere and Manukau East. It was believed that Lange's intention was that by handing over his seat to Gosche - a proven left-winger - the left-leaning Field would win Manukau East, leaving the right-leaning Robertson without a seat (Young, 1995b). In the event, this potentially problematic situation was resolved by Gosche's last minute withdrawal as a candidate, which left Field and Robertson securing the nominations for Mangere and Manukau East, respectively. Throughout this event, Clark came out supporting the two incumbent MPs for their nominations, even though Robertson was a well-known Moore supporter. She asserted at that time: 'Traditionally - and I can't think of any exception to this - the leader has supported colleagues going into selection contests. If I expect loyalty from MPs, I've got to give it back' (Young, 1995b).

### Evaluations of Clark's leadership

Despite her efforts to prove her superior leadership skills, the evaluations of her performance varied (in some cases greatly) in the caucus, depending on MPs' support positions.

Not surprisingly, the most favourable appraisal came from her loyalists. Asked whether Clark met her expectations in terms of provision of better leadership, Ruth Dyson replies enthusiastically:

... she's actually been... I think quite stunning in some of the things she has been able to do. She has got nerves of steel, I always thought she had, but she has proven that beyond doubt. She's got an amazing capacity for work and determination to get things right... I think she's got more out of the caucus than I would have expected. She's got loyalty from lots of people in the caucus that I couldn't imagine she would ever get... So, in some ways, I think she has been better than I thought. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

This group of MPs also enjoyed the leader's personal approachability and willingness to provide support at the personal level.

She's very publicly and politically supportive of colleagues. And if you go to her with an issue, she will think very carefully about what you've said... and she'll come back to you. And on policy stuff, personal stuff, on political stuff, Helen is fastidious at getting back to caucus members. And others find she's up till all the hours of the night answering phone calls or answering messages. So, she goes to a huge extent to make people feel good. She'll often ring you - and I know a number of other caucus people - Helen will ring every now and again just to have a chat. How is the family, how's the electorate, you know, usually they are about specific issues she wants to ask you about, but then she will give you a chance to have a general carry-on as well. (Tizard, interview, 1998)



Clark's willingness to remain accessible to her fellow MPs was also appreciatively acknowledged by Dyson, too.

She's really busy. [But] if you walk past her office, and she will have people walking in about... caucus members can just go into her office at anytime. I think that's mad. But she does it. She likes it. She likes to say: 'Come in.' (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Although not as enthusiastically as the Clark loyalists, most of the 1993 Moore supporters gave the new leader positive endorsement for her leadership style. As one MP puts it:

... I believe that Helen Clark did reasonably well in keeping the caucus, getting the caucus to work together despite those contests of ideas that [have] always been part of the Labour Party and politics. We were in absolute ferment most of the time. We were a party of change. When you're the party of the status quo, it's easy to be united. When you're the party of change, everybody's got their own ideas about [in] what form that change should take place. And she did it pretty well, and let me list one or two of her other qualities: she's extremely hard-working. I've never seen her the worse for alcohol, she is loyal to her subordinates, strongly loyal to her subordinates. A lot of leaders think loyalty is something those lower down have for those higher up - it's not owed in both directions. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Michael Cullen expresses his satisfaction with Clark's leadership in the following terms.

I was very happy with Helen's leadership style in the caucus... I've never felt that Helen was going to embarrass you, or do something which was like, 'Oh my God', you know, 'What's happened now? How do we clean this mess up?' So, there was never any of that sort of situation with Helen. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Even some MPs who defected from Labour during her leadership praise Clark's leadership. Margaret Austin was one of them. 'She had grown into the job quite well' (Austin, interview, 1997).

Clark, however, could not meet every caucus member's expectation. Most notably, two groups of the 1993 uncommitted Clark supporters were left disappointed and this was reflected in their assessment of 'poor' for her efforts. Interestingly, those two groups were disappointed for opposite reasons. Firstly, a few MPs on the left felt that the new leader was too generous to her opponents and questioned the merit of such leniency. For example, David Lange wrote in his weekly column for *The Dominion*:

Ms Clark's victory [in 1993] was not overwhelming. It may have been the narrowness of it which persuaded her to pursue even-handedness in her management of the caucus. Friend and opponent alike were rewarded... Retribution was [avoided]. (Lange, 1995)

The former leader continued: 'For all that, the immediate post-succession period was very destructive. There was destabilisation stimulated by the disaffected' (Lange, 1995).

The example which he provided to illustrate his point was Clark's handling of the 'ambush' nomination of Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan for the chairperson of the Electoral Law Select Committee in February 1994 and the other three Labour members' failure to second it. Clark's response was to strongly condemn those hapless MPs even though they happened to be Clark's supporters in the 1993 leadership change. Her action was designed to massage the bruised ego of the Maori MP, who had hinted at her defection from the party in the wake of the leadership change. One of the Committee members, Richard Northey recalls:

Ah, I thought it [Clark's public criticism] was appalling. There wasn't any truth in it. We were just carrying out a caucus decision. (Northey, interview, 1998)

Another Committee member, Mark Peck, says:

That hurt. That hurt. I mean I'm not sexist. And neither am I racist. And I always got on well with Whetu as well... And I mean, myself, Pete Hodgson, and Richard Northey did exactly as the caucus told us. It was all over in a minute. In fact, in less than a minute, probably about twenty seconds, and it was all over. (Peck, interview, 1998)

When Northey sought an explanation from Clark, it became clear that the three male MPs had to be publicly reprimanded to resolve a more pressing issue.

... She [Clark] said: 'No, we've just got to solve this problem.' She felt Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan felt really hurt, and that was the main problem we've got to solve. (Northey, interview, 1998)

Although it may have seemed politically necessary at that time, to appease a grumpy MP was one thing, but to do so at the expense of her own supporters was an entirely different matter<sup>273</sup>. Although this incident did not cause Northey, a Clark loyalist, to review his support for her, he admits: 'Well, it affected it [his view on Clark] adversely because I felt it was an unfair comment' (Northey, interview, 1998).

Similarly, the caucus left MPs were critical of Clark's shadow cabinet portfolio allocation. As Hunt notes: 'In fact, there were criticisms by some of her supporters that she had been too generous' (Hunt, interview, 1998). Those Clark supporters anticipated better representation of their own group in the line-up, and consequently they were disappointed. In Maryan Street's words, 'some of her supporters were really brassed

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<sup>273</sup> Also, from a more overall strategic viewpoint, her willingness to accommodate those Maori MPs' demands seems questionable. As James (1994b) and Riddell (1994a) noted, by the time Clark acquired the leadership, the long-standing relationship between the Maori and the Labour Party had already weakened significantly. Although any further loss of the Maori links would have been a blow to the party, there was a sign that the younger generations with different political perspectives and aspirations had started looking for another political affiliation elsewhere, especially with the New Zealand First Party. Considering that Labour failed to win any of the five Maori seats in the 1996 election, one needs to question the appropriateness of Clark's tactical decision to make numerous concessions, in terms of securing her leadership in the long run.

off about that' (Street, interview, 1999). One such MP, Lange, saw a risk in Clark's decision and gave her a stern warning:

In the effort to sterilise the poisoned chalice, dependence on the right has grown incrementally. Of Labour's front bench of eight, I see two only as being on the left, and this is to include Ms Clark herself among the left. The preferred could doubtless argue that the positions are filled on the basis of merit, or even that the distinction between right and left has been submerged in common subscription to agreed policy. If I were Ms Clark, I wouldn't count on it. (Lange, 1995)

Such disapproval, however, seemed to be confined to a small number of MPs, whose commitment to Clark was not strong. In contrast, the loyalists on the left, who were also initially dismayed by her decision, quickly overcame the sense of disappointment, and accepted (and endorsed) their leader's position that unity of the caucus was the priority. Far from undermining her position, therefore, Clark's resolution to treat the whole caucus fairly enhanced her supporters' faith in her skills and judgement.

Helen was very clear right from the start that it wasn't going to be a factionary based frontbench, and that caused some argument, too. But she was very clear about that. And I agreed with her. I think it was the right thing to do. I thought we had had enough of only the loyalists to the leader being rewarded. I thought it was time to recognise people's skills and give them an opportunity to contribute. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

The dissatisfaction with Clark's leadership style was also found in the second group of the 1993 uncommitted supporters - some of the newer intake. In contrast to the caucus left's frustration, and sharply contradicting the Clark loyalists' positive appraisal of her in this respect, they were highly critical that Clark was *not* providing sufficient support and encouragement to MPs on an equal basis. One new MP attests:

I think that leaders need to be conscious of that... despite their work loads, they have colleagues that really do need to be talked to and included. [I will] give you an instance. After I got elected... about the second week that I was a Member of Parliament, I had an issue I wanted to speak to Helen about... so I picked up the phone and rang her. And she picked up the phone and then put it down again, you know. 'Oh, I've got the message. You don't bother the leader, right?' That's the message I've got. So, I never rang her again. The only time I *ever* rang her was when she rang and asked me to ring, or if the Whips said that Helen wanted to talk to me about something. So, I mean that I wasn't able to forge a strong relationship [after] that point. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The same MP continues:

... I really think a lot of effort's got to be put into making sure those that formed the caucus have their views valued, and listened to, I think that's the first thing they have to do... I'm a fan of what's called a 'high performance team'. I don't know whether we have done any team building, but I believe in putting groups together, giving them jobs to do, and reviewing their work. Now, that can be through your caucus committees or special groups or whatever. But I think you have to have teams that are performing and reporting. So you have an accountability function going on through your caucus and through the leadership. I also think that it

doesn't hurt occasionally to sort of go around the back benches and sit down and see how they are doing and make sure people are reasonably happy. And that's an area that the leadership - not just Helen, but most of the senior members of the caucus are lax [at] doing. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Interestingly, some Clark loyalists admit that such criticism was not surprising. For instance, Judith Tizard acknowledges that sufficient appraisal was not always forthcoming from Clark (possible reasons for Clark's behaviour are discussed later in this chapter).

She has a very high expectations of people. I think she doesn't always give people credit for what they do do. She's often very critical of what they haven't done, without accepting what they do... (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Nevertheless, they do not see her alleged shortcomings as a major problem in the given circumstances and are prepared to defend their leader. For example, Northey says: '[t]here's a certain sort of personal stiffness and inapproachability', while adding in her defence 'which are in a sense quite good and appropriate in the leader that you are not quite equal to everyone else any more' (Northey, interview, 1998).

The same group of newer MPs also found Clark's heavy reliance upon a certain group of people objectionable. They argue that Clark's 'inclusive' leadership style did not extend to her source of advice on crucial matters and that only particular individuals were asked for their input. Among the sources of great influence on the leader, one name received constant mention: Heather Simpson, then Clark's Executive Director (and now the Chief of Staff in the Prime Minister's Office), for whom Clark openly admitted her unreserved trust<sup>274</sup>. One MP says:

Well, I think she relied a heck of a lot on advisers... I mean one or two advisers were very close to her. For instance, Heather Simpson is extremely close to her, has been since she [Clark] was a [Health] Minister. And I think she relied quite heavily on her, and a small group of members of Parliament were intensely loyal to her. People like Steve Maharey, Lianne Dalziel, Judith Tizard, to name a few, were very, very close to her. And what she would do was seek advice, assistance, and reinforcement from them. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Phil Goff cautiously agrees that Clark's inclusiveness had a limit.

... she's inclusive in the sense that she's prepared to use all the skills in her political team and in terms of their portfolio responsibilities. Probably she might have been better advised in a perfect world to seek advice on political strategies and skills from a wider group of people. (Goff, interview, 1998)

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<sup>274</sup> Criticism of Simpson was not new. For example, one journalist wrote that Clark had been accused of depending 'too much on a small coterie of loyal advisers and MPs, especially Heather Simpson, and was unwilling to follow advice from others' (Kilroy, 1996c). Clark openly acknowledged a great deal of trust in her adviser. In an interview, she justified her reliance by saying: because Heather knows *exactly* what I think' (emphasis original) (Clifton, 2000b: 15). While aware of criticisms of her relationship with Simpson, the leader seemed to disregard them, simply attributing them to jealousy (Bain, 1999). See, also, McLoughlin (2000).

Even some strong Clark supporters admit that there was some truth in this criticism, although, again, they defend their leader. For instance, Maryan Street notes:

I've seen Helen... I've seen Helen do that [relying on a small group of people]. And I understand the impetus for it on her part. She's got to have people around her whose intellect she admires. And in the end, when you have been through the sort of things she's been through, there are very few people you can trust. So, she has surrounded herself with... well, hardly surrounded herself. She's got about two people in her office who are close guardians of her in a way, and that has tended to alienate some of the caucus members as well; they are not happy with that.

And I think probably, I mean Helen has Heather Simpson and Tony Timms, and Jonathan Hunt, now probably Mark Burton<sup>275</sup> the Senior Whip, close to her. And, because of those people there are... some caucus members who find it difficult... to get through to Helen. They find them as a block between them and Helen rather than a facilitator<sup>276</sup>. (Street, interview, 1998)

From a slightly different angle, Street's successor, Michael Hirschfeld argued that the homogeneity of Clark's inner circle in terms of their views and skills also presented a problem to her leadership. He believed that she tended to value intellectual abilities at the expense of other skills and viewpoints<sup>277</sup>, consequently leaving those MPs lacking the former attributes feeling unappreciated.

I think that's in a sense a management mistake of not recognising the skills and levels that people can bring because of a view that says that policy detail and the intellectual coherence of policy detail is too important... That's not what the world is about. Or even being right... But politics is a wider assembly than that, and I'm sure there are people who don't have some of those skills which are more highly valued, who could bring value, that feel excluded.

Nearly all successful groups are comprised of people with different skills. That's my personal view point. But the right network is important. And the criticism is that we have too high a level of common skills... and too great an emphasis on that slightly too narrow range of skills. ...[T]hose who closely surround her share Helen's strengths and probably therefore her weaknesses. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

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<sup>275</sup> Mark Burton was elected as Senior Whip after the 1996 election. In 1999, he became the Minister of Defence and Internal Affairs amongst other portfolios as well as Deputy Leader of the House. As one of Clark's trusted colleagues, the 16<sup>th</sup> ranked Minister currently lives in a separate house on her official residence (Main, 2000a).

<sup>276</sup> According to one journalist, Simpson was often regarded as 'Clark's gatekeeper - someone whose approval MPs must gain to get access to their leader' (Clifton, 1995c).

<sup>277</sup> In an interview, she attested that a good education was a necessary requirement for politicians to work effectively. 'We are dealing with complex issues which we have to cut through to understand the essence. Take something as complex as the changes to roading funding and management which the government is considering. The discussion documents on this are so theoretical, so abstract and so complex most people would not understand what they are about. You have to have the ability to read quickly, understand it, formulate an alternative and articulate it in words of few syllables' (Light, 1998: 21-22).

The problem was that those who enjoyed Clark's trust as a source of advice were mostly derived exclusively from her loyalists, and that that was obvious to the whole caucus. As Annette King notes: '[In] the overall view it would be true to say that she had a group of advisers, a small group of advisers. And understandably so, because they were the people who had organised for her to depose Mike Moore' (King, interview, 1998). Not all her opponents or uncommitted supporters were given the same opportunities to make similar contributions. Even some senior MPs were 'out of the loop' (King, interview, 1998). (Why the frustration with Clark's leadership style in terms of unity was confined to some newcomers is to be discussed shortly.)

### **B. Policy expectation/concern: policy shift**

The first step Clark took in this aspect was to confirm Labour's basic position in the political spectrum. In the early stages, she showed an inclination to meet her supporters' expectations by re-defining what Labour stood for. In April 1994, she commented: 'We won't seek to be all things to all people...we'll be sharpening our profile on issues of concern to most of our core constituency, keeping the principles of our industrial relations policy and updating and revising policy areas like health' (McManus, 1994). In another interview, Clark defined the 'core constituency' as: 'people on lower and modest incomes, people identified with the industrial labour movement and the Maori community and other ethnic minorities such as Pacific Islanders and increasingly in Auckland the Indian community' (Edwards, 1994a). At the same time, Clark clearly positioned Labour as a centre-left party. In 1994, she said: 'I'm certainly strongly against us being the centre party, because the centre party can't be a major party. The centre party will be a party that makes up the balance [of power] for one party or the other... The only viable position for us is as the social democratic, centre left party with the other smaller parties coming to us' (Ralston, 1994a)<sup>278</sup>.

Like the first shadow cabinet portfolio allocation, any policy shift was anxiously watched by the caucus moderate/right. Perhaps in order to appease these anxieties shared by the right, shortly after the leadership change, the deputy leader, Caygill, wrote an article in which he outlined the expected policy directions under the new leadership. He asserted: 'Labour's goal (like National's) must be to be the largest party. To achieve this, we must broaden, not narrow, our appeal. Explanations for the change of Labour leadership based on a shift of ideology can thus be readily dismissed'. He continued:

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<sup>278</sup> Almost all caucus members appeared to be satisfied with being in a centre-left party. The exceptions to this, were Dunne, who eagerly painted himself as 'centre right' (Laugesen, 1994h), representing 'the middle class' (Dunne, 1992 and 1994) with strong opposition against an increase in tax and social spending, and Moore, who openly maintained that the party should be positioned at the centre, not centre-left (Moore, 1994a).

We cannot afford to allow the economic gains achieved so painfully in recent years to be squandered now by hesitation or policy drift. Nor can we continue to ignore the social divisions many economic reforms have produced. Or, to state the goal of social justice another way, the fruits of a stronger economy cannot be allowed to fall simply where the implacable market determines or New Zealand will become a very unpleasant and un-New Zealand place to be<sup>279</sup>. (Caygill, 1993)

Despite this reassurance given by the deputy leader, there remained noticeable tensions within the caucus because of the presence of some minority MPs on both sides who had uncompromising views and because of the mutual distrust between the two camps. For the caucus moderate/right, in Goff's words: 'The concern that the [1993 leadership] change signified a shift to the left was destabilising' (McLoughlin, 1995: 119).

Probably sensing this uncertainty, Cullen repeatedly insisted that Labour's policy change, especially the economic policy, would be a 'fine-tuning' of the existing policy presented at the 1993 election, rather than a complete re-writing (Kilroy, 1994a; MacLennan, 1994a). Clark was fully supportive of Cullen's position. From the early stage of her leadership, she was determined to lead the party's policy changes with a steady and firm hand. In so doing, unlike her predecessor who carefully avoided controversial issues for the sake of party unity, she was prepared to tackle them whenever necessary.

For example, at the caucus retreat in Nelson in late May 1994, amongst the issues dealt with for the first time since her elevation was Labour's stance on the Reserve Bank Act (1989). The act, which was passed by the fourth Labour Government, ordained that the Reserve Bank pursue currency stability as its sole objective; its contract between the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank sets 0-2 per cent as the targeted underlying inflation range. Although identified as one of the linchpin pieces of legislation by Cullen for the stable economy (Cullen, 1994), the act was viewed as hindering job growth by some left MPs, who were calling for radical changes or its total abolition. Clark was not prepared to tolerate such a move. Labour's policy needed to be altered to the left, but not to that extent. At the caucus meeting, she managed to make the caucus accept her own recommendation to broaden the Bank's inflation target from 0 to 2 per cent to -1 to 3 per cent. At the same time, the caucus rejected other more radical proposals such as removal of the Bank's statutory independence as unanimously as possible 'without being unanimous' in Cullen's words (Herbert, 1994c).

Clark exhibited similarly prudent leadership in her handling of another contentious issue - the tax policy. The left's natural preference was to increase taxes on the wealthy,

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<sup>279</sup> A similar statement was made by Cullen in March 1994, in which he said: 'The party that can best articulate a practical programme to those ends will likely form the core of the next Government. It will, by definition, be a party of the centre Left. That does not just mean of the Left alone, or the Centre alone, as some of my colleagues seem to argue as they pirouette on the heads of pins apparently in the mistaken belief that they are angels. (NZPD, vol. 539: 432)

while the right, led by Dunne, openly opposed such an option. On 3 December 1993, Cullen made it clear in his letter of invitation to discussions on economic policies that Labour's programme would not require any tax increase. Contradicting this position, a few days later, Clark indicated that a comprehensive overhaul of the tax system including direct taxes was on the table for discussion. 'No one wants to go back to the high tax rates of the past, but there is a real issue over the extent to which tax rates were cut in 1988' (Rentoul, 1993c).

However, this position was reversed by mid February 1994 due to the improved fiscal situation. On the eve of the caucus retreat, Clark said: 'I don't myself think that we would need to change the tax scales to make a point of principle. If the resources we require are there, and the growth that is coming through will generate enough to do the kinds of things we want to do to address poverty, then that is not necessary. The most recent fiscal update convinced me most of what we must do can be done now' (Clifton, 1994a).

By late September 1994, Labour had a re-think about its tax stance once again, in an attempt to re-claim its status as a major centre-left party from the Alliance after the massive Selwyn defeat. During the doomed by-election campaign, a group of MPs including Maharey, Dyson, and Clark had a meeting at Maryan Street's home, the purpose of which was reported as being 'to make progress on policies' (Riddell, 1994c).

The tax policy announced by Cullen in early October 1994 indeed included an increase in income tax for an income over \$60,000 by 6 cents per dollar. While this announcement triggered the long-predicted departure of Dunne from the party, this policy shift was hardly surprising, given both Clark (Campbell, 1994a: 17) and Cullen's personal preference for such a move<sup>280</sup>. In the same policy announcement, Labour promised to boost spending on Family Support, health, education and other social areas by \$650 million, if it was elected as the government. In a newspaper article which preceded the announcement of these policies, Cullen explained the basic stance of the party and the 'redistributive' aim of the economic policies in the following terms:

The costs of restructuring and of recovery have been borne disproportionately by low-income earners, by Maoris, Polynesians, and women, by the young and beneficiaries.

If we are not to create a permanent underclass, the Government must act to ensure the levels of economic growth we have experienced over the last two or so years are sustained and the proceeds shared with those who have suffered most over the last decade. (Cullen, 1994)

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<sup>280</sup> For instance, Cullen commented on the new tax policy in October 1994: 'I've always believed [the tax system] should be a little more progressive than it has been in the last few years... So it's certainly positioning Labour to say, yes, we do believe in the tax system being used for redistribution purposes, and unashamedly so' (Campbell, 1994c: 14).



The most significant public initiative by Clark herself in terms of policy came at the party's 1995 annual conference. Her 'personal agenda' speech' (see Chapter 6) was remarkable in the sense that the party's return to its traditional stances such as universal provisions of social services and assistance (James, 1998b) was clearly signalled. The belief in fairness, participation, opportunity, inclusion, dignity, equality, and humanity were explained by the leader as 'Labour's values'. Her personal agenda to realise such values included: abolition and replacement of the Employment Contracts Act; realisation of full employment; provision of free, quality early childhood education and universal student allowances; elimination of poverty; repeal of market rents for state housing; reduction of waiting times for surgery; and removal of asset testing of geriatric hospital and rest home patients and home care (NZLP, 1995: 45-46).

The speech was not only designed to re-claim Labour's traditional values, which was surely welcomed by her centre-left supporters as a sign of her commitment to the new centre-left identity of the party, but also according to Street, to 'dispel fears' among the centre-right MPs. Despite her careful handling of the issues, the concerns in the caucus that Clark was intent on 'leaping to the left' and that she would exclude those who did not share such policy views still persisted. By publicly clarifying her personal intentions on the policy, the wary MPs were reassured of the boundary of the policy shift as well as her genuine intention to be inclusive (Street, interview, 1999).

During the first three-year period, Clark managed to shift the party's policy in the manner which she intended. Indeed, Clark's 'personal agenda' was later fully incorporated into the party's election policies. Accordingly, Labour's planned spending in social policy areas increased to achieve what she set out to do. At the 1996 election, it promised an extra \$1.4 billion in the first year, rising to \$3.77 billion in 1999/2000 if elected to the Government.

So, how was Labour's policy shift perceived by the caucus members? In sum, the majority of her supporters saw it as quite satisfactory. The policy shift under Clark's leadership was seen by this group as careful and gradual, yet certain. It was a re-definition or further clarification of Labour's existing policies rather than a major policy shift. However, it was still seen by her supporters from the left/centre-left as having successfully re-established the party's identity as a centre-left party. Most of the policy shift which they hoped for was accomplished. For example, in 1994, Steve Maharey, had argued that the party should re-write its core principles (Laugesen, 1994e). Regarding the economic policies, he had insisted:

- Use the state to redistribute wealth so all can live with dignity and independence.

- Promote a socially just and economically productive mix of market forces and public intervention.<sup>281</sup>
- Favour public ownership of economic and social resources when appropriate.

By the time Clark was approached by the five front bench MPs Labour's policies had, by and large, embraced all of Maharey's ideas<sup>282</sup>.

Given this, when asked whether she was contented with the policy shift under Clark, one Clark loyalist replies fervently: 'Yes, very much so' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). S/he continues:

... I think that under Helen it has been quite a lot more explicit that we're a centre-left party and that's our ground, you know. So I think we've staked our ground from the sort of waffly centre that we were before. And I mean, you have to realise that we have come from being viewed as a right-wing party and government, we've come a long way. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The transition from the previous image of the centre-focused Labour Party under Moore's leadership was noted by another Clark supporter, Street.

I think as far as the policy shift is concerned, there has been a policy shift. And I think it is much more now aligned with core Labour party principles than it was previously. So, in terms of a comparison with the '84 to '90 Government, there has undoubtedly been a shift under Helen to the left. And that wouldn't have happened under Mike. One because I don't think he had the intellectual fire power to understand what kinds of shifts were needed, And secondly, he didn't have the political will to sell something that was going to make us look left-wing when he thought we should be more centrist. (Street, interview, 1998)<sup>283</sup>

Besides the content of the shift, the Clark supporters welcomed the precision of the policies, which they thought had been absent under Moore's leadership. As one MP puts it:

... It is those specifics going into an election, which clearly defines what you're going to do in a certain situation, what the policy will be and how it will be implemented. We could take every person in this Parliament, and we could all write a general policy statement in New Zealand that we would all agree on... Where people differ is how we reach that goal. And I think that [the clarity regarding how to reach the desired goals] was one of the differences [between Clark and Moore]. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

<sup>281</sup> Elsewhere Maharey explained his idea of 'intervention' in the following terms: 'The way forward is to adopt a developmental form of state intervention. Such an approach means making use of the state to promote the competitiveness of New Zealand, not just as an economy but also as a nation. This would not see the state taking over from the market, or vice versa. Rather, it would be the state's role to act as a sort of "conductor", trying to direct and "harmonise" the efforts of market actors. The state is taking a leading role in the economy but it does so by negotiation rather than command.' (Maharey, 1992: 15)

<sup>282</sup> In a newspaper article, Cullen argued for 'intelligent government intervention' (Cullen, 1994). Regarding the third point which Maharey made, Labour promised no further asset sales under its governance in the 1996 election manifesto.

<sup>283</sup> See, also Street (1997b: 149-150).

From the viewpoint of Clark supporting moderate/centre-right MPs, there was no objectionable major philosophical change from the previous leadership (Caygill, interview, 1996). Similarly, the majority of the 1993 Moore supporters found the policy shift under the new regime acceptable. One MP, who supported Moore both in 1993 and 1996, sums up: 'I think we [the 1993 Moore supporters] were by and large pretty comfortable'. S/he adds that her/his concern about the extent of the policy shift turned out to be unfounded: '... her [Clark's] own policy position on a number of issues demonstrated that... a lot of her own instincts were moderate rather than left-wing' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). Another Moore supporter on both occasions, Phil Goff, approved the party's economic policy direction with some caution. In an interview for a magazine published in December 1994, he asserted: 'We should be building on the [economic] recovery and ensuring the benefits are evenly spread across the community. That doesn't mean a spending spree. I'm comfortable with the income proposals we have adopted' (McLoughlin, 1995: 119). Asked about the party's policy positions, Mike Moore stated in November 1994: 'I would have some differences, but so what? If you're saying is there one flash point where you say 'look I can't live with this, I'm walking out of here' the answer is no' (Kilroy, 1994b).

If the majority of caucus members' acceptance of the policy shift came as no surprise, neither did the disappointment felt by minority groups on both the right and left. For the right, the proposed economic policy, especially the tax increase, presented a serious problem. Among them, Peter Dunne was the most publicly vocal and consistent critic of Labour's new policies (eg., Harris, 1994; Campbell, 1994b; and Goulter, 1994c) until his departure in early October 1994. Indeed, he attributes his decision to his ideological incompatibility with the party re-fashioned under Clark's leadership.

My decision to leave the Labour Party was based on two premises. One, an increasing policy incompatibility with the leadership, and a realisation that things would only get worse. While I never felt personally threatened (in fact, quite the contrary despite frequent invitations in caucus and in public from David Lange for me to leave) I did not relish the fate likely to befall me of being Labour's long-term 'tame' right-winger. I did not want to be the person wheeled out for respectability reasons on various occasions to show that we were a broad church, when in fact we were not.

The second reason for my departure was an increasing realisation from the late 1980s, that my personal politics were more classic liberal than neo-socialist or social democrat and that that I was out of place in the Labour Party...<sup>284</sup> (Dunne, 1999a)

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<sup>284</sup> He continues: 'I had become particularly interested in the work of people like Dr David Owen in Britain with his original SDP, and subsequently the resurgence of the Liberal Democrats, and felt that with proportional representation looming, something along those lines was needed in New Zealand. It is an interesting point to observe, despite United's comparative lack of success to date compared to other parties, that that void still exists on the New Zealand political spectrum, which is why I still continue to seek a role. (Dunne, 1999a)

Although the most vocal, Dunne was by no means a single figure who resented the new policy direction in the caucus. According to him, there were several colleagues who shared his views to a varying extent. Among them, Margaret Austin was the only MP who 'consistently spoke up'. David Caygill and Clive Matthewson were supportive of him to a lesser extent, while a less influential group in the caucus, Jack Elder, Ross Robertson, and George Hawkins also supported him (Dunne, 1999a).

As for Margaret Austin, who later formed the United Party together with Matthewson and others, her frustration with the left's attempt to influence the party policies also led her to the same conclusion as Dunne. (However, she also emphasised that that decision was 'by far' motivated by her sense of urgency to secure a centre political party which would be capable of forming a coalition with either National or Labour under the new MMP system).

The other aspect of it was that during the course of the early months of 1995, we started to put a definitive policy together, and it was perfectly clear that the left was once again exerting their influence on economic policy, social policy, trying to manipulate me in education policy. And week after week, it would be left to Peter Dunne, Clive and myself to mount the debate to challenge what was being proposed. That gets very tedious and frustrating in the end, but I suppose what really, absolutely [was] the last straw for me was being asked to come to a meeting on tertiary education policy, and being asked to sign up to policy which in my view not only threatened but would require change to the legislation with respect to the autonomy of tertiary institutions. I just wasn't prepared to go down that pathway. So with that, some of those things made the decision to go easier. (Austin, interview, 1997)

Given their views, which by then became apparently incompatible with the party policies, the defection of those right-wing MPs seemed to be a forgone conclusion. Their positions could no longer fit the party's newly defined 'centre-left' identity<sup>285</sup>.

The frustration with the policy shift was not confined to the caucus right; it was equally experienced by a few left-wingers, although for an opposite reason - the policy shift was too small and too moderate to their liking. Like their right-wing counterparts,

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<sup>285</sup> An interesting question one may raise here is: Why did the others not follow Dunne, Austin, Matthewson, and Elder (the latter left Labour for New Zealand First in April 1996)? One possible explanation is that they did not experience the same level of frustration as those who left. Certainly, that was the case for Caygill, who was comfortable with the policy changes despite his personal objection to the tax increase. Dunne suggests another reason. 'I think the short answer to this question is that most have put their own electorate fate ahead of principle' (Dunne, 1999a). He elaborates that some Labour MPs such as Phil Goff, Jim Sutton and Peter Tapsell were interested in joining United or at least supportive of the formation of the party. 'Phil Goff was certainly interested in being part of United, and indeed his interest flagged only about a month before the party was launched, because he figured his long-term prospects were better in the Labour Party. I am not sure that Jim Sutton had ever gone as far down the path as Phil Goff. Jim Sutton was certainly of the view that a party of the type we were envisaging was required under MMP, but he felt that it should emerge after the 1996 election, not before. In any case... he felt that his electorate was not an appropriate base from which to be involved in such a party'. (Dunne, 1999b)

their views were too extreme for the majority Labour MPs, even under the new centre-left banner.

The first public sign of the dissatisfaction of the left appeared in February 1994. Following the news of Clark's decision to rule out tax increases to fund Labour's proposed increased social spending, both Richard Northey and Graham Kelly carefully expressed their disapproval. For example, Kelly said: 'I still hold to the view that those on higher incomes can afford a little more without even noticing it going, so we can pay for health, education and so on' (Clifton, 1994a). Several days later, at the first caucus retreat of the year in Masterton, two MPs - Paul Swain and Graham Kelly - were reported to have challenged the economic policy direction presented by Cullen (Herbert, 1994b).

However, after this point onwards, the left's frustration with the party policy was publicly aired by one person - David Lange. In March 1994, Lange argued that the image of party unity, which had been crucial for a party like Labour where it was under the previous First-Past-the-Post system, was no longer important under the new electoral system. What was critical was clearer identification along their policies, which inevitably required 'some realignment of political groupings'. He went on to identify two policies to exemplify how realignment might take place.

Some of its [Labour's] members believe, as do most Government members, that the Reserve Bank Act is the pillar of the economy and discount other instruments of economic management.

I don't. I believe that the obsessive concentration on the inflation rate, and the neglect of other instruments, is destructive...

It's the same with taxation. Some on both sides of the House believe that taxation is theft. I don't. I think it's in the public interest that some people who can well afford it should pay more tax than they do now. (Lange, 1994a)

Lange further encouraged his party to establish firmly as a centre-left party, rather than 'maintaining a fiction of unity'. In his view, losing some MPs from the caucus was not only inevitable but 'desirable'. 'Hence my pleasure at the prospect of the right wing's leaving us<sup>286</sup>, and my disappointment at it's apparent determination to hold us hostage' (Lange, 1994a).

Labour's disastrous showing at the Selwyn by-election and the Alliance's surprisingly good performance at it caused Lange to urge the party leadership to declare the party's identity.

Here lies a choice for the Labour Party. It must decide if it wishes to be the major party of the left, or if it prefers to be a party of the centre, the perpetual pawn of

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<sup>286</sup> More than 10 days before he wrote this column, he publicly invited Peter Dunne to resign from the party 'for his own sake and for the integrity of the party and for the integrity of Peter' (Laugesen, 1994c).

larger groups. If it chooses the left it must define what it means to be of that persuasion. (Lange, 1994b)

He went on to state that the decision was a matter of leadership 'in the sense that once the choice is made, the leader must make the direction plain'. Later he likened Clark to 'a rally driver with three navigators' with '[l]eft, right, centre' as the simultaneous calls, which he described as 'wall-hitting stuff' (Lange, 1994b). Lange's message was clear: Clark needed to decide the party's direction which should involve personnel changes. In the same article, he argued that in case the party and Clark decided to choose the centre, she would have to remove him from the front bench as he 'cannot support the new orientation, nor invite voters to support it' (Lange, 1994b).

In Lange's view, his message was ignored. Hence his criticism continued. In June 1995 (by which time he had announced his retirement at the 1996 election and was subsequently removed from the frontbench) he re-visited Labour's policy positions. This time, his criticism was even more blunt: '...Labour has taken on the personality of a centre party and has the policy of a centre party'.

For all the rhetoric, Labour today is further to the right than the last Labour government. The pursuit of low inflation and the balanced budget remains, but not centralised wage bargaining or the possibility of pay equity, which the Labour government offered. The promised tax increases are cosmetic.

... There is no plan to restructure the economy in favour of the people who usually vote Labour. It's a view of the economy the National Party could live with. In terms of economic policy, Labour is to the left of National on matters of style, not substance. It's genuinely left of National on the non-economic issues, which don't make a lot of difference to the way people live. (Lange, 1995)

So, what did Lange believe Labour should do in terms of its policy? In his later column, the former Prime Minister admitted that his government did a lot of 'what was right in the economy', the achievement which he believed the party 'should be proud of'. However, at the same time, he added that '[w]e got some of it wrong' and that '[w]e should acknowledge that'. He further argued that Labour did not need to defend the ideologies behind National's economic policy which denied any role of the government in the economy. Instead, the party should promote the government's more active role, that was to 'engage with the economy, and manage it'. Instead of being an 'interested spectator' as the fourth Labour and the present National Governments were, the government must have aims such as 'improving education and training, increasing investment, or increasing employment' as well as the means of achieving those aims. Taxation (both increasing and decreasing thereof) and provision of universal services were suggested as such tools (Lange, 1994b).

Despite the announcement of Clark's 'personal agenda' at the 1995 Party Conference and the subsequent policy changes to accommodate her views, they were not sufficient to erase Lange's feeling of disappointment with Clark's leadership.

If I was disappointed it was only at the leadership's insistence on claiming that a policy stance which is actually to the right of the last Labour government is somehow an assertion of old Labour values. (Lange, 1999b)

### **Elective expectation/concern: winning the 1996 election**

If Clark's performance in the two previous expectations had been regarded as a success by the majority of the caucus at the time of the crisis in May/June 1996, they could hardly argue the same about her achievement in the last expectation - winning the 1996 election. While the actual election was still only several months away, the indications in the opinion polls were not good. In fact, as described in the last chapter, after becoming the leader in December 1993, both Labour and Clark personally constantly struggled in the polls. By the time the five frontbenchers made an approach to Clark, Labour was in a considerably poorer form than when it was led by Moore, and accordingly the chance of the party winning the coming election looked remote.

Clark responded to Labour's and her own popularity problem through at least five approaches - without major success. Firstly, she denounced the media (and public) bias against female politicians including herself<sup>287</sup>. For instance, in June 1994, she stated in her address to female business leaders that 'women often need to go beyond the mainstream media to get their message across'. 'Those attributes which are in men are still turned against women. To succeed in politics, as in business, women must be strong, determined and forceful.' 'In terms of the stereotype, instead of being strong, they are tough; instead of being determined, they nag; and instead of being forceful, they are bossy. If the stereotypes are applied, women just can't win. If they were weak, lacked persistence, and didn't make their mark through their actions, they couldn't succeed anyway' (MacLennan, 1994b). In December 1995, after surviving the crises caused by the disastrous 16% poll rating and the party list, Clark said: "We've done a lot of qualitative research on me over the years and people will always say Helen Clark is very intelligent, hardworking and she's right... but the media say she's got a poor image' (Chisholm, 1995).

Secondly, Clark tried to bring back Mike Moore into a more prominent role in the Labour line-up. These attempts had two purposes. Even after his defeat, Moore was still popular among the electorate. In particular, he was believed to have strong appeal to the male-working class voters, who had deserted the party after December 1993. At the

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<sup>287</sup> See also H. Clark (1996), Light (1998), and Main (1998a). Her criticism seems to have some justification. See, Ralston (1994b) and McGregor (1996a).

same time, the inclusion of Moore in the responsible role was expected to stop his constant and open criticism of the party and would help project a unified party image. Clark recollected the problem she encountered with Moore and the media attention his comments had attracted:

Because a woman had never before led a major political party in New Zealand the news media implied that it was therefore somehow illegitimate for one to aspire to do so, particularly when she shoved a bloke out of the way. The whole thrust of media coverage from December 1993 right through 1994 had a sort of subtheme of the illegitimacy of my holding the position. Everything Mike Moore said was always cranked up because I was this awful woman who pushed a nice bloke out of the way. (McGregor, 1996a)

Clark offered a front bench position and/or shadow trade portfolio four times during the period between December 1993 and June 1996. On each occasion, Moore declined, stating that he could not guarantee his loyalty to the leader who toppled him, which would be required by acceptance of such positions<sup>288</sup>.

Thirdly, she attempted to de-emphasise the significance of the poll results. Regarding the party's standing, she often pointed to the party's better performance in the 'constituency vote' polls (as distinct from 'party vote' polls<sup>289</sup>), arguing that on election day, party votes and constituency votes would come very close<sup>290</sup>. On her personal rating, while admitting that the leader's popularity matters during election time, she said: '...I don't think that in the end people vote on the popularity of the leader of the party. Mike Moore was a leader with consistently the best ratings and yet he couldn't secure victory for the party in 1993' (Roger, 1996: 54). On another occasion, she argued: 'I certainly haven't seen polling that says people aren't going to vote for Labour because of Helen Clark' (Kilroy, 1995).

Fourthly, Clark referred to her 'inclusive', 'consensus' approach. On her poor personal ratings, she stressed that it was due to her selfless leadership style. For example, in February 1995, she said:

I could spend the whole budget boosting myself. I won't make the obvious allusions that this has been done before and hasn't won elections either. In the end Labour stands or falls on the quality of its policy and its ability to relate it to real needs of real people in real communities. (Kilroy, 1995)

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<sup>288</sup> For example, when he was offered a job for the second time, in April 1994, he said: 'I think it would be dishonourable to take a job in a situation where I can't give 150 per cent. I was hurt as leader when people wouldn't give me 150 per cent.' (Gardiner, 1994)

<sup>289</sup> The 'constituency vote' polls asked: 'If a general election were held now, which local candidate would you vote for?' while the 'party vote' question was: 'If a general election were held now, which party would you vote for?' (See, the *NBR* opinion polls.) To both questions, participants were required to answer with the name(s) of political parties.

<sup>290</sup> Clark made this point clear in the wake of the 1996 failed leadership coup during an interview with Bill Ralston on 3 *National News* (31 May 1996).



The inclusive approach infers distribution and sharing of responsibilities. On several occasions, she attributed her own and the party's struggle in the polls to some unco-operative caucus members. Clark stated in February 1996 (after the leadership crisis in late 1995): '... there was the fact there'd been a hell of a lot of carping, criticism and whingeing within the caucus... I went on to say, "I've read newspapers in which some of you say that I have got the courage to stand aside if that's what the party needs. However, what you need to contemplate is what people will think of the Labour Party which hasn't got the courage to stick with a leader. Over to you"'<sup>291</sup> (Roger, 1996: 55). Her view was that '...people don't, in the end, vote for people who are fighting themselves, and banishing that as a factor is very important' (Wilson, 1997). In other words, if the party was unpopular while being divided, the blame should be placed not solely upon her as the leader, but also upon the caucus members who caused that division. In October 1995 after the disastrous poll result, Clark commented: 'I'm not the only person who takes responsibility for it. Everybody's got to take a part' (Kilroy and Speden, 1995).

Fifthly, a series of attempts were made to improve her image by hiring media advisers<sup>292</sup>. Ross Vintiner, who was behind Labour's successful election campaigns in 1984 and 1987, was appointed as Clark's media adviser. He, however, left the position 11 months later over Labour's strategies. His position was taken up by Di Billing who lasted only for two months, again having failed to lift her public image. Billing's successor, a former political editor of *The Dominion*, Mike Munro, has improved the situation, but Clark's real turn-around had to wait until the 1996 election campaign - nearly four months after the failed coup attempt - during which she made a 'Cinderella-like transformation' on airwaves thanks to two media trainers, Judy Callingham and Brian Edwards<sup>293</sup> (Kominik, 1996).

So, between December 1993 and May/June 1996, how did Clark's performance in terms of meeting expectations and dealing with concerns affect her support composition?

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<sup>291</sup> At the two caucus retreats in May 1994 and November 1995, the lack of discipline and failure to stick with the party policies among the caucus members, at least, were discussed.

<sup>292</sup> This is not to say that Clark did not try to raise her public image. In October 1995, for example, her staff published an eight-page tabloid called 'Labour News' which extensively featured Clark including numerous personal photographs. See Trotter (1995). Clark also attempted to be seen at places and events which were traditionally regarded as 'working class' such as horse racing and rugby league. The effect, however, was not always positive. Seemingly feeling uncomfortable, she often looked out of place. Regarding criticism of Clark's media effort, see Jesson (1994).

<sup>293</sup> Regarding the advice which Clark likely received from them, see Edwards and Callingham (2000).

## **The success/failure to fulfil expectations/resolve concerns and its impacts**

### Unity

Despite the fact that the caucus remained severely divided throughout the 1993~1996 period, in the eyes of many caucus members, Clark's performance in the unity criterion was satisfactory and did not affect their views of her negatively. This paradox could be explained by the group's general consensus on the matter that the continuation (as well as the origin) of the divisions was beyond her personal control and responsibility. In other words, the caucus believed that the infighting was perpetuated *despite* her effort to resolve it. The caucus members universally appreciated the seriousness of the divisions as well as the leader's genuine and continuous effort to mend them.

This probably signified the lower degree of importance assigned to the unity criterion in leadership retention consideration than the other criteria, especially that of elective. In assessing Clark's performance in terms of unity, the emphasis seemed to be on the *input* (her effort) rather than the *outcome* (the result of her effort). Certainly, such leniency was not exhibited by a considerable number of MPs in May/June 1996 when it came to her performance in the elective criterion.

However, as already noted, some of the 1993 uncommitted supporters found her leadership unsatisfactory for opposite reasons. The first group, comprised of the caucus left, considered Clark's 'inclusive' leadership style over-generous to her 1993 opponents. On the other hand, some 1993 newcomers saw the level of her support and encouragement as insufficient. What also concerned this second group was the leader's heavy reliance on a small group of people. Not surprisingly, both groups' allegiance to Clark weakened by 1996.

One may question why the second group's concerns over Clark's leadership style was not prevalent amongst the 1993 Moore supporters. Probably, failing to gain full trust from the new leader was predictable for the 1993 Moore supporters. When Clark became the leader in 1993, this group was anxious about Clark's possible retaliation. In comparison, Clark's subsequent 'inclusive' leadership, despite its limits, were seen positively by this group. To put it simply, when one's expectation is low, it is not difficult to satisfy it.

This was not the case for some of the newer intakes who voted for Clark without *positive* support. Their insufficient knowledge of both Clark and politics in general at the time of the 1993 leadership change may have created unrealistic expectations from her leadership. Needless to say, the higher the expectations, the greater the disappointment when they are not met. With regard to the level of support that Clark provided to the caucus members, Richard Northey asserts that MPs' judgement of the leader's performance in this respect often reflects their preferred leadership style. He says that, for example, unlike Moore, Clark preferred contacts with her fellow MPs

'through the normal caucus meetings, caucus committees rather than... taking people out to the Green Parrot [a restaurant popular among Labour MPs] or wandering around the corridors [like Moore did]' (Northey, interview, 1998).

In support of the Clark loyalists' argument, the 1993 Moore supporters assert that Clark's leadership style was justifiable given her workload. Furthermore, they say that Clark always gave support whenever it was sought (O'Connor, interview, 1998). Along a similar line, Caygill attributes this perceived problem to the nature of politics as well as his caucus colleagues' wrong expectations of a political leader.

Helen wasn't somebody who was easy to get close to. I didn't regard myself as a close personal friend, for example, even though I was her deputy. But I was her deputy... not her partner... We had a good working relationship. I could go to her and talk to her about matters of concern, and I did. She appeared to listen. She wouldn't always agree, but that's not the measure of success.

Politics is very much a sink or swim business. And many people do sink. Some ... eventually struggle back to the surface. But... there is no formal training for it. Much of the skills have to be acquired on the job. I think political parties struggle to acculturate new members and to help them fit in and give them useful roles. And that's especially true in opposition. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Similarly, regarding Clark's reliance on a small group of MPs and advisers, both her 1993 opponents and loyalists defend the leader by arguing either that that was not an uncommon problem among political leaders or that it was understandable under the given circumstances. For instance, according to Phil Goff, any leader, especially when s/he is under heavy criticisms and pressures (as Clark was between 1993 and 1996) is likely to turn to the colleagues whom s/he can trust. (A similar point was already raised by Street earlier.) The extent to which a leader can be 'inclusive' has a limit under such circumstances.

... I guess when you are under pressure as the leader of the party - a part of the pressure is simply time - that you are going to rely on a smaller rather than a larger group to give you input as to what you ought to be doing personally, and the psychology of leadership is interesting. When you are under criticism on a whole lot of different fronts, you don't necessarily want to go to somebody that is going to give you more of the same. You want to go to somebody that can give you the sort of psychological uplift and support you are looking for. I'm making that comment generally rather than about Helen specifically because I think it applies generally. So, if it's a criticism of Helen, it's a criticism of most other people who have ever been leader. (Goff, interview, 1998)

The 1993 uncommitted supporters who entered Parliament did not have an accurate understanding about what they could expect from Clark as a person or a leader. Nor did they possess knowledge about party leaders in general. Expectations formed by those MPs did not reflect their real chance of realisation by Clark, and, not surprisingly ended up in disappointment.

## Policy

Clark delivered what she set out to do at the beginning of her leadership regarding the expected policy shift. While a radical policy lurch was avoided, Labour's policies received further definition and clarification with an additional emphasis on social policies. As a result, Labour arguably established a more centre-left identity. However, as predicted, the caucus members on each end of the ideological spectrum found the policy shift disappointing. On the one hand, the caucus right felt that the shift had gone too far. The proposed tax rises, more generous social spending, and more assertive role of the government in the economy made them increasingly uncomfortable with the new direction. Subsequently, four MPs left Labour to either form or join other political parties, which offered them a more compatible ideological base as well as a better electoral prospect.

On the other hand, the disappointment was also felt by the caucus left, although none of this group resorted to defection. As it has been documented, Lange was the most outspoken critic of the policy direction of the party under Clark's leadership. However, Peter Dunne comments that Lange was not the only MP whose expectations were unfulfilled: '... Mr Lange was one of those on the left who felt alienated, with others in that category being people like Graham Kelly and those from a traditional trade union background' (Dunne, 1999b). So, who else was in the same category as Lange? Maryan Street, a regular attendee at caucus until her retirement in October 1995, says that if a distinction was made between the left and the centre-left in the caucus during her presidency, the former was 'very small'. She further adds that while this small group<sup>294</sup> strongly adored Lange and even might have agreed with some of his criticisms in some respects, only 'very few' of them experienced his level of despair (Street, interview 1999). In fact, a group of left MPs saw the former Prime Minister's open criticisms of the party and the leader as 'destructive' and urged him to halt them.

... people in that left group went to David and said: 'Stop it... You cannot keep on doing this. This is just terrible'. (Street, interview 1999)

The fact that their original expectations of a leftward policy shift were never realised did not appear to adversely affect Lange's fellow caucus left MPs' support for Clark (especially *positive* support of loyalists). This, together with the same MPs' acceptance of Clark's failure in another (minor) expectation - favourable shadow cabinet portfolio allocations - are to be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Despite the low level of frustration among this group, there was speculation that the majority of the caucus left/centre-left had become dissatisfied with the moderate level of the policy shift. For example, in April 1994, one journalist reported that within the

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<sup>294</sup> She loosely includes in the caucus left, Steve Maharey, Lianne Dalziel, Trevor Mallard, Graham Kelly, Judith Tizard, Liz Tennet, and Ruth Dyson among others (Street, interview 1999).

caucus Lianne Dalziel and Steve Maharey were organising a coup against Clark because of the lack of a leftward policy shift (Small, 1994b). Margaret Austin is of a similar view:

During the 93-95 period they became very disillusioned and there was talk of a coup which was very real in 95-96. ... My assessment is that they always saw the Clark-Caygill team as a stop gap on the way to achieving their agenda which was greater alignment with the left of politics and themselves in leadership. The reality is that none of them are... regarded as the rising stars they themselves believe they are or were although I am certain that Steve Maharey still thinks of himself as the only one to give Labour the leadership it needs. (Austin, 1997)

However, both Maharey and Dalziel strongly deny that they entertained the idea of replacing Clark (Maharey, interview, 1998). Although Maharey acknowledges his own ambition, he stresses that it is not an ambition 'at the personal level'. 'I'd walk across anybody's face if I have to restore this party's sense of mission. But I wouldn't walk across anybody's face for my own personal ambition' (Maharey, interview, 1998). He admits that he has always wanted to be a Cabinet Minister. Nevertheless, that is as far as his aspiration goes:

I actually consciously don't want to be [a leader]. I think there are better people than me to be Leader, because I understand myself well enough to know that the kind of person that I am would make being a leader a very, very difficult thing. That's true of any leader. You know, David Caygill... once was asked to be the leader of the Labour Party and turned it down, because he understood himself well enough to know it was not a good idea. I think I understand myself well enough to know it wouldn't be a good idea. So, I've never really thought of myself seriously as a leader of the Labour Party. I've always thought myself as ... hopefully battling my way through to being a significant Cabinet Minister in a centre-left government. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Similarly, Dalziel, who was named as a future world leader by *Time* magazine in late 1994, denied any immediate leadership ambition. In an interview in early January 1995, she said that she was not planning to become the leader at that stage, while adding: 'But I'm not going to rule it out at some time in the future. Of course I'm not. Who knows?' (Campbell, 1995)

### Elective

By far the most pressing issue for the Labour caucus was Labour and Clark's own low popularity. By May/June 1996, all the opinion polls were indicating that the party was heading for the biggest election defeat in the party history. So, how did Clark's 'failure' in this regard affect both her supporters and opponents' views of her as the leader?

Naturally, the Clark loyalists became concerned about Labour's failure to capture public support. However, amazingly, none of her 1993 loyalists changed their positions

and remained loyal to the embattled leader. (The reason why they were unaffected is to be examined in more detail in Chapter 8.)

The effect of the low popularity on the 1993 Clark opponents was, on the other hand, more predictable. Indeed, it was this very concern which propelled the five frontbench MPs to approach Clark in May 1996. Annette King, Phil Goff, and Michael Cullen all emphasise that no other reason came into consideration when they made that critical decision (King, interview, 1998; Goff, interview, 1998; Cullen, interview, 1998).

Whatever other initial concerns they might have had at the beginning of her leadership - in relation to a shadow cabinet portfolio allocation or a policy shift - Clark had by then alleviated them. Moreover, she had proven to them that she was more than a competent leader in difficult circumstances.

However, no matter how difficult, it was nevertheless her responsibility to lead the party successfully, and one measurement of success was the opinion polls. Her superior leadership skills were considered by increasingly nervous MPs as an insufficient reason for putting off a leadership change. As one MP who was in favour of a leadership change notes:

If she had been competitive with Bolger as most preferred Prime Minister in the opinion polls and if Labour had have been performing really to the level that we should have expected in the opinion polls, she'd have been very acceptable to most. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Cullen agrees:

I think there was a genuine attempt by Helen to be very inclusive, to balance the interests of different sections of caucus, and to try to provide an overall platform that all could be reasonably happy with. The difficulty was, I think, that because of the nature of the 1993 coup, when Mike, the last working class hero in the party, had been replaced, Helen's leadership in that period always faced enormous difficulties with the public at large. In a so-called attempted coup, [it] had nothing to do, at least for many of us, with any form of antipathy to Helen. It was simply a desperate feeling that an election which ought to be ours for the taking... [but] at least, at that stage, we seemed to be struggling to maintain ourselves as a major party... (Cullen, interview, 1998)

Goff further explains that it was the continuous 'trend' in the opinion polls that worried him:

The polling, you should never panic at a poll that shows one or two-off, or three-off decline. You should never ignore the polls. But when you have a trend in the polls over a long period of time, then that is usually reinforced by what people are telling you in your electorate, or what people are telling you in the groups you meet, then you simply can't bury your head in the sand and say: 'Oh, I hope it all goes away.' Yes, so that was our reason for approaching her. We thought we were doing disastrously and she was doing disastrously in the polling, which I'm not stating as an opinion, I'm stating as a fact. We were doing disastrously in the polling. That required us to examine all options. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Cullen argues that given the seriousness of the trouble in which Labour was at that time, his and other Labour colleagues' positive views of Clark needed to be put aside.

Ah, well, I think that you have to realise that this was a judgement about the public's judgement, considered judgement about our judgement. This was a judgement about the opinion polls, and the polls that'd come out with us hitting as low as 14 per cent, certainly consistently under 20, with Helen's rating consistently very low... Absolutely ridiculously low. But, you know, there is a reciprocal democracy that produces judgements which are not necessarily correct, that just happen to be a majority judgement, that's all. And at the end of the day, you know, if you think basically the bar of soap is pretty good, but the wrapper is not working, I mean... you have to say: 'Well, I thought the wrapper was lovely', but the public was saying something different. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

The 1993 Moore supporters were not the only group of MPs who were tempted by the idea of changing the leader. Some of the 1993 uncommitted Clark supporters became either waverers or pro-leadership change. In Goff's words: 'there was a very significant group of people who voted against him [Moore] in '93 who by '96 felt they had made a mistake in so doing' (Goff, interview, 1998). In particular, those who were not standing or were being given low ranking in the party list, on which they could not expect to return to Parliament, given the poll rating at that time, were concerned about the situation<sup>295</sup>. For them, choosing an unpopular leader (with hope of improvement) at the beginning of their career was one thing, but continuing to support her close to the election time was another matter completely. After the party list was announced, journalist Jane Clifton asserted:

...list selectors relegated key backbench talent like Mark Peck, Janet MacKey, Rick Barker and Damien O'Connor in a way that has to rebound on Ms Clark. They are all marginal seat MPs. Without the insurance policy of a high list place, they cannot much longer sit back and tolerate a poor poll performance from either the party or its leader. (Clifton, 1995e)

As they were the same new intake who found Clark's leadership style less than exemplary, the incentive to consider changing their support for her was even stronger. The Junior Whip, Larry Sutherland, witnessed a change of mood in some of the 1993 intake.

... it may well have been that some people felt a bit aggrieved about the fact that they had been talked into or coerced into or persuaded perhaps, a better word, to vote for Ms Clark in the initial stages of rolling of Mr Moore... and that they felt very angry about that, and felt that it shouldn't have happened. And even though they had gone and carried out that wish to vote against Mike Moore and put in Helen Clark, because Helen Clark wasn't doing well in the poll stand, [they thought] that they should flick back again to Mike Moore. There was that sort of feeling among a few. (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

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<sup>295</sup> The 1993 intake who supported Clark in 1993 but were considering changing their support in 1996 and their list rankings were: Philip Field (not standing on the list); Rick Barker (No.29); Martin Gallagher (No.25); Janet Mackey (No.18); and Mark Peck (No.22).

One such MP was Mark Peck. Without hesitation, he admits that if there had been a caucus vote on the leadership in June 1996, his vote would have gone to an alternative candidate, Mike Moore.. The reason for his change of mind was simple - he wanted Labour to win the 1996 election.

I simply wanted to win. Right? I was sick and tired of being in opposition. I was sick of it after a year. You can't do anything in opposition. And I mean, the people that I wanted to represent were hurting, and I didn't think we offered them anything by being in opposition. (Peck, interview, 1998)

And to win the election, in his judgement, was not achievable under Clark's leadership.

... I've publicly been loyal to Helen, and my arguments with her would have been in caucus. I've never publicly announced any position other than support for leadership. So, loyalty is not the issue. What the issue for me, is who can win. And if you want to look at the one issue that occupied my mind, it is how we could win the election and form the government after the '96 election. And I didn't see that with Helen as the leader, we could do that. (Peck, interview, 1998)

The continuously poor showing in the opinion polls also led the dissatisfied MPs to question Clark's suitability as the leader of the party, especially when in opposition. Some MPs thought that Clark lacked the necessary personality traits and/or skills to become a successful Leader of the Opposition<sup>296</sup>.

I mean I've always said that Helen will make a better Prime Minister than Leader of the Opposition because she has the ability and rationality and work ethic to do that job well. As Leader of the Opposition there's some advantage in the person being a bit of a cowboy - although that probably is a sexist term, but it doesn't quite seem right to call it a cow person - somebody that is able to go out there and smite the issue and belt the issue and put the Government on the back foot. I don't think Helen herself would argue that it is her chief skill. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Along the same lines, another veteran MP asserts that different sets of qualities and skills are required for being a successful Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition. Like Goff, this MP came to the conclusion that Clark was better equipped to be a successful Prime Minister. To lead a major party in Opposition successfully, s/he says, the leader was missing a vital asset: 'charisma'.

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<sup>296</sup> Clark herself was aware of this. More recently she confessed that female Opposition Leaders required a different approach from male counterparts. 'As a female leader of the opposition I can't really operate the way a man would in the same role. The public doesn't like women who attack or who are aggressive. People say Muldoon was a brilliant opposition leader and he cut peoples' throats all the time. I could not get anywhere with a political style which was based on attack, even though the role of the opposition is to oppose, because coming from a woman it's seen differently. Labour's fortunes changed when we adopted a positive, constructive style for the election campaign in 1996.' (Light, 1998: 22) Elsewhere, she said: 'There is no harder job in politics [than the Leader of the Opposition]'. 'You don't take anything for granted. Your job is on a tenterhook for you to deliver results. There is no deference towards you' (Main, 1998b).



... Her strengths were acquired strengths. She is not a flamboyant leader. She is not a star on the television. And she is not charismatic. Her qualities will make, if she gets the chance, make her a more successful Prime Minister than Leader of the Opposition. There are qualities that a Leader of the Opposition needs and there are qualities that a Prime Minister needs, and they are not all the same. And the ability to draw attention to yourself and blow your own trumpet, it's something you definitely need in opposition. You don't need it when you are in government because the attention of the public is on you anyway. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The erosion of those MPs' confidence in Clark as an election winner was now blatantly obvious.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the 1993 Clark supporters' expectations and her opponents' concerns as well as her dealing of them during the 1993~1996 period. The background of this duration was the serious caucus divisions, a direct result of the brutal and messy 1993 leadership change. The level of volatility and absence of good will towards the new leader from a number of her colleagues made Clark's work as the leader more difficult.

Despite such high odds, unlike her predecessor, Clark largely succeeded at meeting the expectations and alleviating the concerns. Through her careful and determined leadership, she managed to keep the majority of her original loyalists contented without antagonising her 1993 opponents. While some caucus members (original uncommitted supporters and opponents) felt disappointed and a few of them left the party over their disagreement, such fallout (which was expected anyway due to the introduction of the new electoral system) was minimal.

Clark's leadership, however, was not a resounding success in the view of her opponents in one particular area. She failed to raise her own and Labour's popularity in the opinion polls. In the end, it was this aspect of her leadership that eventually precipitated the May/June leadership crisis.

While the findings and analysis in this chapter have generally confirmed the propositions of the thesis, a necessity to amend one of the propositions has also been suggested. The category of 'uncommitted supporters' encompassing caucus members who do not belong to either loyalists or opponents has turned out to be inadequate. Some of the 1993 Clark uncommitted supporters were totally committed to removing Moore and saw her as its means to achieve that goal, while others were genuinely undecided over the two candidates. While the original classification of uncommitted supporters envisaged the latter group (waverers), the former (pragmatic supporters) was a new finding. The two types had markedly different attitudes towards the leader as well as support reliability; it was apparent they did not belong to the same group. In order to

rectify this inadequacy, this chapter has sub-divided uncommitted supporters into two groups.

Important questions remain to be answered. For example, one of the characteristics of Clark's original support composition in comparison to that of Moore's was her high proportion of loyalists. Did this characteristic affect her leadership survival in 1996? If so, how? An equally interesting question is how pragmatic supporters and waverers differed. These questions are addressed in the next chapter, the second part of the analysis of the Clark leadership.

## CHAPTER 8

### Retention of the leadership and loyalists

#### **Introduction**

As discussed in the previous chapter, as far as the majority of Clark's opponents' were concerned, her success as the leader was overshadowed by her perceived inability to lead the party to a victory at the 1996 election. At the same time, some of her wavering supporters – particularly those from the 1993 intake – had started to reconsider their position by the time the May/June leadership crisis developed.

Like Chapter 5, the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the validity of the study's propositions regarding leadership durability. The analysis of Moore's leadership has revealed - in support of the propositions - that his demise as the leader was indeed attributable to his weak support composition and his failure to deal with his colleagues' expectations and concerns. As discussed in the previous chapter, Clark's original support composition was 'stronger' than Moore's in the sense that it contained a higher proportion of reliable loyalists. Another difference from her predecessor was found in her better handling of the expectations/concerns, although she was not entirely successful at it. Did these differences contribute to Clark's survival? This is one of the key questions that require close examination.

The analysis starts with how Clark's support composition had changed by the May/June 1996 leadership crisis.

#### **The 1996 support composition**

According to the information gathered from research interviews, in May/June 1996 when Clark was asked to step down by the five frontbenchers, Clark's 1996 support composition appears to have been as follows:

Loyalists:	Blincoe, Burton, Caygill, Clark, Dalziel, Dyson, Hodgson, Hunt, Kelly, Maharey, Mallard, Northey, Pettis, Sinclair, Sutherland, Tizard, White, Yates
Uncommitted supporters:	
Pragmatic supporters:	Braybrooke <sup>297</sup> , Lange
Waverers:	Carter, Field, Mackey

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<sup>297</sup> Geoff Braybrooke, one of the 1993 Moore loyalists, was generally considered a Moore supporter again in 1996 by the pro-change group. However, he says that he would have voted for Clark despite his personal friendship with the former leader. (Braybrooke, interview, 1998)

Opponents:           Barker, Cullen, Duynhoven, Gallagher, Goff, Hawkins, Keall, King,  
Moore, O'Connor, Peck, Robertson, Swain, Sutton, Tapsell,  
Tennet, Tirikatene-Sullivan, Wetere

A comparison between Clark's 1993 and 1996 support compositions indicates three interesting points. Firstly, Clark almost completely failed to broaden her support base into the 1993 opponents; nobody from the 1993 Moore supporters was prepared to support Clark in 1996, except for Braybrooke. In addition, she seems to have lost three uncommitted supporters, namely Barker, Peck, and Swain in the same period. This all happened in spite of Clark's efforts as described in the previous chapter.

Secondly, despite the serious popularity problem which she faced after her inception as the leader, her loyalists stayed with her in their entirety. As earlier hinted, included in this group were those on the left, whose policy expectation was not met in its original form. Furthermore, Clark had gained three new loyalists - Maharey, Mallard, and Sutherland - during this turbulent period.

Thirdly, because of the minute change in her support composition between 1993 and 1996, the vote was once again split almost along the MPs' intake year groupings: this time the pre-1990 intake overwhelmingly supported a leadership change while the majority of the post-1990 intake adhered to Clark.

Now this study examines several questions which stem from these three points in the following sections. The questions include:

**The Clark opponents:**

- Why were these MPs not convinced of Clark's virtue as the leader?
- Why did Moore become a likely alternative leader among many pro-change MPs?
- Why did the majority of the pre-1990 intake support a leadership change?

**The Clark loyalists:**

- Why did this group not desert the leader even when Labour's poll ratings were disastrously poor?
- Why did three 1993 uncommitted supporters become loyalists during the troublesome period?
- Why did the caucus left loyalists not re-consider (or downgrade) their support as a result of the less than expected policy shift?

**The Uncommitted supporters:**

- What were the factors that eventually persuaded them to stay with Clark?
- Why did those factors work for those MPs and not others?

### **The Clark opponents**

The question as to why Clark failed to convert her 1993 opponents into her supporters seems fairly obvious, given Labour's worsening popularity problem throughout her leadership. As a political journalist, Colin James, put it, 'MPs who discover they have a diminished future also tend to develop diminished loyalty' (James, 1994). They might appreciate Clark's clear focus and competent leadership skills, but what they expected from their leader was primarily the ability to win popular support and an election (and protect their seats). Any other leadership skills were simply secondary to it. No matter how effective and impressive Clark had proven herself as the leader internally, their support was still hinged upon her 'external' success measured by the opinion polls. In another journalist's words:

...MPs loyalties coincide with their own interests. And no matter how much the caucus admires the job Helen Clark might have done in drawing them together or working up policy, if she is damaging their chance of being re-elected, reality will outweigh loyalty. (Young, 1995c)

King's following comments exemplify Young's point.

In 1996, Labour was going through a particularly bad time in the opinion polls, and we had for several months. I was concerned about the leadership of the Labour Party - not about Helen Clark because Helen Clark actually is a good leader. She's a strong leader, and she's a fair leader. But I was concerned that we'd reached 15% in the opinion polls, and we were facing an election in a few months time. (King, interview, 1998)

Apart from turning around Labour's diminishing popularity, could Clark have done anything to change her opponents' positions? One MP replies dispassionately:

No. Politics is pretty, I mean, pretty brutal. If you can't deliver, you don't retain support as Leader.

... it's a pretty unforgiving business. You've got to be succeeding to stay at the top, you have to be. If you're not delivering the results, you're not going to last. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

The importance of the leaders' ability to win an election was further highlighted by the re-emergence of Moore as an alternative leader for many Clark opponents.

### **Re-emergence of Moore as an alternative leader**

When Moore was approached by some concerned caucus colleagues regarding his availability, the situation resembled that in 1990 when he stood against the unpopular Palmer. And as in 1990, he was considered by his backers an ideal alternative leader for one reason and one reason only, ie., his popular appeal. For example, Mark Peck confesses:

The only candidate I could see winning the election at the time that issue came up was Mike Moore. And I would have supported him. He would have got my vote. (Peck, interview, 1998)

The 1993 novice MP reports that the two and half year experience in national politics taught him to appreciate Moore's strengths and abilities. Asked to elaborate on them, he continues:

[He is a] Better communicator. Got on well with people. I mean he could go into any room of people and be quite comfortable with them. He was what you might call 'on message'. He could very quickly work out which issues were the ones around which we could gain support. And I suppose when you are looking at winning an election, that's what it's about - getting votes. He's quite quick on that. Things like law and order, mental health, looking after senior citizens, doing something about the health system, things he is very quick 'on message' about. And I felt, aside from that, no other person in the caucus actually had a clear coherent message to deliver. (Peck, interview, 1998)

Another factor which worked to the former leader's advantage was the limited amount of time left before the election. As Clark's clear determination to hold on to the leadership guaranteed that any move to oust her would be bloody, the new leader needed to already be very popular; the positive impact of the new leader's appointment needed to outweigh any damage caused by another leadership change. Names such as Cullen, Goff and King were frequently mentioned by the media (eg., Speden 1995), but nobody seemed capable of producing such a strong, positive impact in only a few months. For instance, Cullen, who contemplated becoming the leader back in October 1995, was acutely aware of his lack of charisma, and concluded that sufficient time was not available to establish himself as a popular leader before the election.

That [a leadership change to Cullen] was not going to lead to an automatic and immediate increase in Labour's support; I just don't have that kind of charisma and natural appeal... (Cullen, interview, 1998)

In this regard, there was only one candidate around - Mike Moore. Even after the 1993 leadership coup, Moore retained his popularity with the public. According to the *NBR-Consultus* opinion poll published on 24 October 1995, 70% of the respondents reported that they had a 'very favourable' (21%) or 'somewhat favourable' (49%) opinion of Moore. This combined 'favourability' rate was the highest among all the Labour MPs surveyed<sup>298</sup>. In comparison, Clark's total favourability rate was merely 42% (9% very favourable, 33% somewhat favourable). As one of Moore's supporters puts it:

It is too close to the election to get a new leader up in the public's mind and build the image. So, it would have to be Mike Moore who already had the image, whose

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<sup>298</sup> Apart from Moore and Clark, the other Labour MPs featured in the poll were Caygill, Cullen, Dalziel, Goff and Maharey.

'following' held up personally in the polls, and you know, had a lot of personal support in the public. There was no doubt about that.

I think we quickly realised that there was not time to put up a completely new figure and... you know, time in terms of selling a new figure to the public... Mike Moore, really, was already on the shelf, if you like. Ready to go. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Another factor in favour of Moore's candidacy seemed to be the potential cost of assuming the leadership under those particular circumstances. Even if someone had successfully replaced Clark, it would be the new leader - not Clark - who would take the blame in case of Labour's defeat at the 1996 General Election (which appeared a real possibility). As Moore had discovered earlier, such a defeat would taint the new leader's record, and could be counted against his/her performance later. Therefore, it would be logical for any ambitious leadership contender to wait until the election was over. In this respect, Moore was seen as the only MP with both the necessary talents and political will. As Goff says:

You have to make a decision as to whether there was anybody else that might be able to recover Labour's position. And Mike was the person who we thought most likely and indeed he may well have been the only person who would have had an interest in leading the party at that particular point. (Goff, interview, 1998)

But, how about his disruptive behaviour after he lost the leadership, which must have damaged Labour's poll ratings? As a result of his actions, the media rated Moore's chance of regaining the top position as quite slim (e.g., Speden, 1995; Clifton, 1996a). Even one of the five frontbenchers who approached Clark, Annette King, confesses that due to his behaviour she had become 'less confident' by May/June 1996 in the former leader's suitability to regain the top position:

... [B]ecause his behaviour was not that of a person who... had been able to get over it [the loss of the leadership] and get on and show what sort of leadership quality you wanted... which is one of the reasons that I would have been doubtful about supporting Mike. (King, interview, 1998)

Did the 1996 Moore supporters not share King's concern? Interestingly, some MPs from this group openly admit that they did. Cullen, for instance, acknowledges that the former leader's behaviour was a cause of concern. 'I think a number of us who were supporting Mike may have indicated to him that we hadn't loved everything he'd done' (Cullen, interview, 1998). Peck is more blunt. '[Moore's behaviour] pissed me off. To be frank, it really did. And in fact, I told him so' (Peck, interview, 1998).

However, there was strong sympathy towards (and understanding of) Moore's position in the group. Geoff Braybrooke argues that considering what had happened to his old friend, his resentment was understandable.

He was very hurt, very hurt indeed. And we all felt for him because of that, and he'd done his best. He's been a working man all his life, and the movement that he'd loved had just kicked him, kicked him in balls, you might say. Nobody appreciates that, believe me. (Braybrooke, interview, 1998)

Phil Goff has a similar view. He maintains that under the given circumstances, Moore's behaviour was as good as one could hope for.

Mike was, you could argue, loyal to the extent that was reasonable to expect him to be, having been Leader, having worked his guts out suddenly finding that the rug was pulled out from under him. There are very few people who can go through that experience and still... come out at the other end and say: 'Well, I don't hold any grievances'. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Along the same lines, a new 1993 intake, Rick Barker, refers to those who expected better behaviour from the deposed leader as 'incredibly naive' (Barker, interview, 1998).

Another 1993 intake, Damien O'Connor, points out that while Moore's action did not help the party, there were others such as Lange and Mark Gosche who were equally guilty of their unhelpful actions. '... Mike Moore wasn't alone in creating a few unnecessarily negative views' (O'Connor, interview, 1998).

Even among those who did not necessarily approve of Moore's actions, the attitude towards him started changing as Labour's popularity problem worsened. One MP explains the situation in the following terms:

You see, he was widely perceived by both his friends and his foes as being a bit bitter and twisted about that. And after a while, you know, this was not helping his cause. But nevertheless at the end of the day, when the crunch came, when the test came, ... he was the one who had enjoyed public support and had a gift [of] being able to communicate - to 'connect' was the fashionable term those days - to 'connect' with the voters. (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

As unforgiving as they were of Clark's failure to popularise the party, those same MPs were equally *forgiving* of Moore's shortcomings and misbehaviour if he could rescue the party and their seats. In one MP's words: 'A leader who will deliver the goods... you are prepared to forgive quite a lot' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

Those MPs' readiness to forgive Moore implied their equal readiness to dispose of him if he failed to perform. It is interesting to note that the majority of his backers were uncommitted supporters in 1993. Two and half years later, their support for Moore was once again conditional. Asked if the former leader could have survived after the 1996 election, one 1996 Moore supporter replies: 'If he'd been successful, he'd have retained it. He, in turn, would have had to deliver the goods' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

If Moore had successfully replaced Clark, but failed to lead the party to victory in the 1996 election (his third election loss in a row), could his leadership still have survived? Cullen's answer underlines the short-term and context-specific nature of Moore's re-emergence in 1996.



I must say my thoughts... they didn't extend to the consideration of what might happen in case of all those circumstances. We were focussed rather more short term than that. Yes, I mean, it's probably fair to say that in that situation then obviously a further consideration would have been given to the leadership at some stage post 1996. Goodness knows. I'd have no doubt have talked with colleagues, talked with my wife, but I hadn't thought about it at that stage at all. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

However, Phil Goff does not believe that Moore's position would have been in any immediate danger even if the election outcome had not been in his favour, although adding that he - like anybody else - could not have expected to be a long-term leader.

Well, I think we thought that, I mean, you weren't going to make Mike the leader of the party to drop him six months later. If he was considered to be a legitimate candidate for the position, then what you were looking at was for the medium term. Nobody is ever a leader for the long term; they are either a short-term leader or a medium-term leader. I don't think there was any concept that Mike would be put there, do the job, and suddenly somebody else would overthrow him and step into his place. I mean, self-Machavellian, and maybe that's the impression people have of politics, but I can assure you that that wasn't the case. (Goff, interview, 1998)

### **Pre-1990 intake**

Apart from their assessment that, under Clark, Labour would not win the 1996 election, the majority of the Clark opponents had something else in common; as in 1993, their group continued to comprise mostly of the pre-1990 intake. This was a direct result of the remaining divisions along the 1993 leadership voting pattern during the 1993~1996 period. What accounted for this stasis? There are two possible explanations.

Firstly, as described in Chapter 6, the feeling of hurt over the 1993 leadership coup felt by the 1993 Moore supporters was never properly healed. One of the major factors which kept the divisions unbridged was the persisting perceptions of ideological positions, formed through past behaviour. The focal point there was over the evaluations of the fourth Labour Government's achievement. This same argument that had been featured during the 1993 leadership change (see Chapter 5) was still rife in the caucus with undiminished intensity. Some of the newer MPs felt so strongly about the issue - even six years after the collapse of the Government - they tended to treat those who did not readily acknowledge (at least some of) the Government's controversial policies as mistakes, with strong suspicion and hostility,

This was ironic considering the *reality* of the ideological status in the caucus. As described in Chapters 6 and 7, apart from a few members at both ends of the spectrum (such as Dunne and Lange), the majority of the Labour MPs agreed on the party's *current* policy positions. This present near consensus seemed to have little effect upon some MPs' grumbling over one another's *past* stances. As one pre-1990 MP reports:

I think you'll find that those who came in after 1990 wanted to blame those who had been there up to 1990 for the errors of the fourth Labour Government. So, there was a lot of blaming [going] on. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Such hostility no doubt consolidated the 'friendships' within each group, which had been formed through the parliamentary entrance classes and the traumatic infighting at the 1993 leadership change. In this environment, it would not be surprising if the anti-Clark, pre-1990 intakes had seen replacing Clark as an opportunity to exact revenge against their colleagues.

The second explanation relates to the actual experiences in government. The pre-1990 intakes were part of the fourth Labour Government<sup>299</sup>. In addition, many of the pre-1984 intakes, in particular, had ministerial experiences<sup>300</sup>. Experiences in government add a different outlook to MPs by making them aware of the absolute necessity of power in order to achieve anything substantive. As one former Cabinet Minister attests:

I mean we are all in this because we want to achieve something in the way of promoting our policies. And really to do that effectively, we've got to be in government. ... some people are in it ... because of personal ambition, they want the positions of power. But to have them you've got to be in government as well. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

King also asserts that 'there was an element of realism' among this group after six years of government experience, and that they 'knew what it was like to govern as opposed to always being in Opposition' (King, interview, 1998). An 'element of realism' in politics is the acute realisation that in order to obtain power, they must first win an election and as a means to that end, the presence of a popular leader would certainly be helpful. The then Party President, Michael Hirschfeld, says that such realisation made many pre-1990 intakes 'hard-headed'.

The Mike Moore supporters were normally those who had been in government, who were more hard-headed people. They had just simply looked at the polls, and drawn their conclusions, I think. The experience of government does make a difference in... how hard-headed some of these judgements are. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

Another 'element of realism' had taught those MPs tolerance of less than perfect leaders. For example, Cullen looks back at the turbulent fourth Labour Government<sup>301</sup> and says:

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<sup>299</sup> Four MPs were also part of the third Labour Government. They were: Jonathan Hunt, Mike Moore, Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan, and Koro Wetere.

<sup>300</sup> Amongst the 1996 leadership change proponents Moore, Wetere, Cullen, Goff, King, Sutton, and Tapsell were Ministers of the fourth Labour Government. Tirikatene-Sullivan was a Minister in the third Labour Government.

<sup>301</sup> For the state of the fourth Labour Government in its final days, see, for example, Russell (1996), Chapter 16.

We [the pre-1990 intake] were not unused to leaders who were sometimes somewhat idiosyncratic. Lange was scarcely the perfectly inclusive democratic leader of the Labour Party. So that, while it [Moore's behaviour] was always a bit of a concern, I mean I always had to sort of watch my own corner to make sure that... strange things weren't happening. [But it] was part of life in the Labour Party. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

What came with higher tolerance was acceptance of a less idealistic image of the leadership. As one former Cabinet Minister notes:

Leaders aren't made in heaven, they only come from the ranks of ordinary people like the rest of us, and there are no perfect leaders. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Phil Goff concurs:

I guess I've been around long enough to know not to want a perfect leader, or to know there's no such animal... (Goff, interview, 1998)

One may argue that the pro-change MPs' readiness to seek another popular leader in place of Clark came as no surprise; it merely verified the conventional view that survival was of utmost importance for professional politicians. Judith Tizard, a Clark loyalist, critically agrees that surviving instincts can be a very powerful factor in politicians' decision making.

People get into Parliament, wanting to be in government, wanting to change the world usually, or at least wanting to make it a better and safer place. ... It's a very interesting job, very challenging job, there is a lot of excitement, a lot of adrenalin, and people get very hooked into being MPs. And... I always say, 'You are an MP to do what?' But when you are tired and threatened, the instinct to hold on to what you have is very strong. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

David Caygill, who served as an MP for 18 years, also explains:

I think that the truth is that for a lot of politicians this is simply the best job they are ever likely to have. They like the job in terms of often literally the salary. ... Many members of Parliament are better off financially as Members of Parliament than they were as farmers or teachers or small business people or whatever. But it's not just the money. This is an exciting job - it's a job with some prestige. Sure, people are cynical about politicians, you know, are rude about them. It's a job that involves a lot of sacrifice. But it is a job that has a lot of compensations for those sacrifices as well. If you've got a kind of ego that likes to be in the public eye, well you know, unless you want to be a television personality or something, it's hard to think of a better job. If you want to make a difference to the country, there aren't many other jobs that give as many as opportunities as this. It's a job where it's easy to feel that you are doing something worthwhile. And I think for a lot of people that is something that they would be loath to give up... they are reluctant to leave that job not just because of the fear of losing... not getting other employment - that's certainly true - but I think it's part of a larger whole. This is a job that most people who are elected enjoy doing. The ones who felt miserable or out of place and hate it are a distinct minority. (Caygill, interview, 1996)

The longer one stays in politics, the heavier his/her reliance on the job becomes, either financially or psychologically<sup>302</sup>. In this respect, there was little surprise that MPs with longer experiences opted for a leadership change to someone who could improve their chance of survival.

This leads to another question: if MPs' concern for electoral survival was so strong and prevalent, why did the majority of the Labour caucus members - especially Clark's loyalists - decide to back her in 1996? At the 1996 General Election where Labour performed better than expected, three Clark loyalists lost their seats: John Blincoe, Richard Northey, and Suzanne Sinclair. In addition, some MPs who appeared to be unlikely to return to Parliament if the abysmal 16 per cent party support continued - such as Dyson (ranked No.20 on the party list), White (No.10), and Yates (No.17) - stood firmly by Clark<sup>303</sup>. What accounted for their decision, which appeared to contradict the conventional view of politicians as people whose primary concerns were their re-election?

### **The Clark loyalists**

#### **Were the loyalists not worried about the 1996 election?**

There were a number of factors which explain why a number of MPs remained loyal to Clark. First of all, some Clark loyalists claim that unlike those who seriously entertained the thought of a leadership change, they were not driven by the opinion poll results. They argue that there were more significant considerations than the party's popularity when Clark's leadership came under pressure. Included in those considerations was the party's credibility as a major centre-left party, which Clark had managed to establish. For instance, when asked to identify the factor which separated the Clark loyalists from the rest of the caucus, after a pause, Ruth Dyson replies:

I think long-term commitment, probably... Although all of us wanted to [come] back into Parliament [and] none of us was sort of prepared to sacrifice ourselves for the greater good, frankly... I think [we had] less self-interest and more interest in where Labour was going to be in the next little while. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

As Dyson's comment indicates, although the Clark supporters valued her achievement as the leader more highly than her opponents did, they were by no means driven by altruism. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the Clark supporters'

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<sup>302</sup> In relation to a move to introduce term limits in Parliament, Geoffrey Palmer commented: 'There is merit in such restrictions. Public life changes one's outlook and sometimes all politicians seem to have more in common with each other than they do with the public they represent. Turning politics into a career does not enhance the performance of the system - it makes survival the only imperative.' (Palmer, 1992: 127)

<sup>303</sup> In November 1995, a political journalist, Jane Clifton, stated that given the then state of the party, only six list members would be returned to Parliament. They included four incumbent electorate MPs Caygill, Dalziel, Hunt, and Jill White. (Clifton, 1995d)

expectations of her leadership was to win the 1996 election. Even in comparison to the seasoned MPs with ministerial experiences who were in favour of a leadership change, they did not lack the desire to win the Treasury benches. The hunger for power was particularly noticeable among those who first entered Parliament before 1993. For instance, Steve Maharey's already noted ambition<sup>304</sup> to be a Cabinet Minister depended upon Labour's winning an election for its realisation. Similarly, another Clark loyalist, Trevor Mallard, was reported to have said:

I have no ambition to be a long-term Opposition MP. The world's too big, there are other things I'd like to do and if I thought it was unlikely we were going to get into government, I wouldn't be a candidate. (Black, 1997)

In sum, the Clark loyalists were concerned about Labour's popularity problem, like their wary colleagues. For instance, when asked about her views when the opinion polls continued to slide, Ruth Dyson replies: 'Oh, yes, of course, they concerned me' (Dyson, interview, 1998).

### **Why did the loyalists stay with Clark?**

The dividing factor between the loyalists and others was the presence (or absence) of *positive* support for the leader. As was the case for the Moore loyalists, the Clark loyalists had acquired a profound knowledge about the leader and her leadership style by the time the leadership crisis emerged. As discussed in the previous chapter, they had been satisfied with her leadership style and handling of policies.

In addition, the small size of the caucus enabled all the loyalists to maintain personal<sup>305</sup> and formal contact with the busy leader, who in turn reciprocated their loyalty with provision of friendship, personal support and encouragement. Consequently, strong *positive* support for Clark uniformly existed in this group, which led them to quite different assessments of the situation from those held by the other caucus members. In short, they firmly believed that the party's interest (including its chance of winning the 1996 election) would be best served under her leadership. For instance, Judith Tizard reported:

... She's having to re-make the job of Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Labour Party in a context that we have not seen before, and it's not been easy. But I'm absolutely sure that nobody else could do it better; while it is not always the best reason to keep somebody as a leader. I'm sure that Helen is the best leader that we have available. I still believe that she will be the best Prime Minister

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<sup>304</sup> Maharey openly admitted this ambition to his colleagues by saying: 'I didn't come in here to be on the backbench, pal. I want to be a cabinet minister' (Maharey, interview, 1998)

<sup>305</sup> Cullen asserts that personal loyalty was strong particularly among some of the female MPs. According to him, one of the 'complicating factors' at the time of the May/June leadership crisis was: 'the first chance of a woman Prime Minister'. 'If we changed the leadership, that chance would have been thrown away, at least for the foreseeable future, for another period' (Cullen, interview, 1998).

this country has seen in the long time if we can get her there. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

One of the 1993 intake, Jill White, explains her position in 1996 in the following terms:

I always believe there is only one poll that counts, and that's the poll on election day. And I also believe that when the going is rough, that that is the time you actually hang on to what you believe, and you know, that's when you get really stuck in with what you believe.

I didn't know that we were going to win or not win the election. But I had absolute conviction that Helen was the best leader. I had absolute conviction. No sort of wavering from that at all. (White, interview, 1998)

Interestingly, instead of undermining their confidence, the manner in which she operated under the constant pressure from both inside and outside the caucus further reinforced the loyalists' *positive* support for Clark. Jill White continues:

... it [her support for Clark] grew in respect... You know, I also have a lot of respect for Helen for the way she has handled a lot of crises. I mean... caucus after the Selwyn by-election was in a... pretty down sort of state... But I very much admired Helen's courage and the way she sort of worked to pull things together. And I admire her sort of strength of character and her resolution... She does not wilt under adversity. ...I think that she *is* a woman of very considerable and admirable character, and I think she's grown in the job. And that is a very good indicator of a person's sort of inner strengths, I think. (White, interview, 1998)

### ***Positive support and its effect on how problems were viewed***

So, how did the uniformly shared *positive* support help Clark when she and Labour were battling with poor opinion poll showings? It led her loyalists to a different diagnosis of Labour's popularity problems. In their view, the causes of the problem lay outside the leader. Therefore, replacing Clark would not help improve the situation. A former Party President, Ruth Dyson, who witnessed (and opposed) the leadership change from Palmer to Moore in 1990 under similar circumstances, states:

I just don't think the answer is changing the leader. I've never thought that's the answer to the problem... I didn't think it when David Lange left. I didn't think it when Geoffrey Palmer left. And I didn't think it when we changed Mike for Helen. And I still don't think it. The leader is not the answer to the problem. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Larry Sutherland shares a similar viewpoint.

... that to have another change of leader was not really the answer to the whole issue. That we still needed more time... that we were really suffering at the hands of [Winston] Peters' popularity and [Jim] Anderton doing his thing. And that really wasn't all of what Helen Clark was necessarily doing wrong, or the negative things about Labour in general. It was basically the fact that we had to be patient enough to wait till people found out that there wasn't going to be... a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow... But generally, I thought it would have been very reckless to have a change of Leader and that Helen Clark did enjoy quite a depth of support

irrespective of the polls, and that we wouldn't be seen as stupid as a party that just constantly keeps changing leaders, and is not totally poll-driven in that respect, and isn't prepared to consolidate itself and say: 'Right, let's look at the ways that we can turn these things around'. It wasn't just Helen Clark's leadership, there were other factors. (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

One of such 'other factors' in the views of the Clark loyalists, was the internal disarray in the caucus. They argued that the on-going divisions between two camps along the 1993 voting pattern and some MPs' behaviour deprived the leader of the opportunity to exhibit her true leadership potential to the public.

... I used to say in caucus: 'We're a team here. OK? That's a point. That's a good point. But, how can you tell she can't do it [winning the 1996 election]? Because when this caucus finishes, somebody is going to go straight down... to the [press] gallery and tell everybody what has been said in here. And then she's going to spend her whole day, being phoned by people who will ask about something that's happened in here, which is bad. So, how do you tell when she is good? She never gets a chance.' (Maharey, interview, 1998)

The loyalists' view was that once given a chance, she would prove to be a successful leader, and the public would eventually come to see it, too. Such a belief was so strong that the deputy leader, David Caygill's confidence about Clark's election winning ability was unshaken by the discouraging poll results. He said that 'I was confident that she could have [won the 1996 election]', adding: 'I still believe that... Labour is likely to win the 1999 election under her leadership' (Caygill, interview, 1998). Asked to elaborate on the basis of his confidence, his reply was as follows:

I would often say to people that you couldn't judge the popularity of a leader from opposition. I had seen two things happen more than once. First of all, I had seen somebody who had been thought unpopular before an election suddenly rise in popularity in the campaign itself.

...What happens in an election campaign is that the Government loses much of its advantage. Outside an election campaign, the Government dominates the news. The Government makes news, the Opposition merely comments on it. The Opposition doesn't announce decisions, it doesn't announce legislation. It criticises, and that is generally seen as a negative function. But in an election campaign, the television stations in particular are obliged to treat the parties and their leaders more equally and even the Prime Minister, whoever he or she is at that point, is often seen merely as the leader of their party, and no longer as the leader of the country. So, the relationship becomes much more equal, and the Leader of the Opposition is seen as a potential Prime Minister, almost by virtue of their leadership of the largest alternative party. And so suddenly people look at these leaders in a different light. And of course if they campaign well... and I had no doubt that Helen's intelligence and ability would create the opportunity for her to come across well... only in that very limited environment of the last two or three weeks before an election. So, I said to people: 'Well, yes, of course you need to be led by a popular leader. But don't confuse the popularity that somebody has or doesn't have now with the popularity that people may perceive just before the critical moment - the moment when they have to cast their vote. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Regardless of the discouraging opinion polls, the Clark loyalists retained their faith that Labour could still win the 1996 election. In their opinion, their expectation for Clark to lead the party to victory had *not* been unfulfilled. Unlike the pro-change colleagues who had already concluded that realisation of the expectation was not forthcoming, the Clark loyalists were prepared to withhold their judgement. In addition, even if the party failed to achieve that goal, according to their view, it was not due to Clark's leadership; on the contrary, if Labour was not being led by the best leader in the caucus, the situation could only be worse than it was.

### **New loyalists**

Similarly, the increased knowledge of and growing faith in the leader were responsible for transforming three 1993 pragmatic supporters - Steve Maharey, Trevor Mallard, and Larry Sutherland - to her loyalists. For example, Larry Sutherland, who assisted Clark's leadership closely as the Junior Whip, says that the experience of working with her led him to the conclusion that Clark was the best person to lead the party.

I don't think any other leader has had to survive against such odds. I go back to Bill Rowling. I used to be Electorate Chairman of Bill Rowling's electorate. I can remember the slow whittling away of him. I can remember the whittling away attempts at Palmer and Lange. But I just don't... think any of those were much up to the sort of pressures that Helen Clark has had to survive under. And so, I think my greatest admiration for her is, and why I thought we should stick with her is the fact that she is unmovable, that she is a force to reckon with, and anyone who can survive those odds is really someone who's got true leadership qualities. And certainly you shouldn't be talking about chopping her head off anyway. (Sutherland, interview, 1998)

Another MP with the same view was Steve Maharey, who voted for Clark in 1993 as a less reliable pragmatic supporter whose initial support for her was due to her sole candidacy against Moore. By 1996, the then social welfare spokesperson had been converted into a solid loyalist: 'I think it would be fair to say that I would be the last person, last vote she would lose in the caucus', if there was a ballot (Maharey, interview, 1998). He describes the relationship that developed between him and the leader during the two and half years in the following terms:

... we got on enormously well during that whole period of time, she knew she could trust me during that period of time. And I knew I could trust her during that period of time. Those are important things, they're very rare in politics. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

In the meantime, his view that Clark was an ideal leader for the new political era of MMP had been enhanced.

I think I said this at that time [to the caucus], that MMP being the system coming along, you need a person who can negotiate, operate, be clear, keep lines of



communication open, be very professional- all of those things I think Helen has in buckets. So, as the MMP era unrolls, I think her strengths have become stronger and stronger. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

A question of interest here is: why did some of the 1993 pragmatic supporters become loyalists while others did not? One variance was the knowledge of Clark at the time of the leadership vote in 1993. Although the new loyalists did not possess intimate understanding of her, at least they had observed her in the deputy leader capacity in the Parliament settings<sup>306</sup>. With better knowledge of her as an individual politician as well as of parliamentary politics in general, their expectations of her as the leader may have been more realistic (thus more achievable by Clark) than those lacking such pre-exposure to her.

Another difference between the two groups was (working) relationships with Clark. Unlike those who found Clark distant and distrusting, the three new loyalists all worked closely with Clark, enjoying her personal trust after the 1993 leadership change. Mallard was initially given the ranking of No.14 with the spokespersonship in state services, internal affairs, and civil defence among others. Rising eventually to No.10, following several defections and resignations, Clark's confidence in him became sufficient enough to name him as one of her 'kitchen Cabinet' members (Clifton, 1997b: 33; Clifton, 1997c: 18)<sup>307</sup>. As noted by himself above, Maharey (another 'kitchen Cabinet' member), also established a close and confiding relationship<sup>308</sup>. The leader's confidence in them paid handsome dividends when her leadership came under pressure.

### **The caucus left: why did they remain loyal?**

While the majority of her 1993 loyalists viewed the policy shift achieved under Clark's leadership as a realisation of one of their original expectations, this was not the case for a few MPs on the left. The achieved policy shift was moderate in comparison to their original expectation. Indeed, as has been seen, it was for this reason that David Lange remained an pragmatic supporter.

However, the other left MPs decided to remain loyal to Clark (or became her new loyalists). This contradicts one of the hypotheses of the study: a leader has to satisfy

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<sup>306</sup> Mallard and Sutherland entered Parliament in 1984 and 1987 respectively. Although Mallard lost his seat at the 1990 election shortly after Clark became the deputy leader, he worked in Parliament between 1990 and 1993 as Executive Assistant to Mike Moore.

<sup>307</sup> More recently, Clark identified him as her potential successor as the leader: 'Watch him if I ever get run over by a bus' (Main, 2000b).

<sup>308</sup> Following the five frontbenchers' approach, David Caygill resigned from the No.2 position. In order to fill the vacancy made by Cullen's elevation to No.2, Clark promoted Maharey to the No.3 position. Maharey explains that that decision was motivated by her desire to bolster her support base on the frontbench. Although two other candidates - Dalziel and Mallard - were considered, the latter's 'enforcer' image and Dalziel's youth counted against them (Maharey, interview, 1998).

his/her supporters' expectations in order to retain (or strengthen) their support. So, what accounted for this deviation from the hypothesis?

In short, those left MPs' expectations of the policy shift were reshaped during the two and half years of Clark's leadership. Just like their reaction to the first shadow cabinet portfolio allocation, which they hoped would reward them ahead of her opponents, those MPs initially found the extent to which the new leader was prepared to change the party policies disappointing. Peter Dunne reports that among them there was 'a sense of permanent grumpiness that things were not moving in the direction that they would have liked, although given the very brittle state of the Labour Party at that stage, no one was too keen to publicly rock the boat' (Dunne, 1999b). What helped them overcome this disappointment and what prevented the loss of their *positive* support for Clark was the realisation of the necessity of pragmatism for the sake of caucus unity. They were able to see Clark having to adopt pragmatism in the leadership in order to include her opponents and heal the rifts incurred by the leadership change. As Maryan Street puts it, 'they [the caucus left] understood what she was doing, and could see the need for it, actually' (Street, interview 1999). The former President continues:

... some were left disappointed but they also understood because of her persuasion and because of her management of the caucus and her attention to the dynamics of that caucus which was feeling very bruised and very embittered. But... any disappointment they had about policy changes was replaced by a recognition of the pragmatic need for that. (Street, interview 1999) (Street, interview 1999)

What appeared to play an important role in the transition of those MPs' views was their faith and trust in Clark. They were willing to accept her positions. And with the acceptance of the necessary pragmatism came a subsequent shift of their policy expectations<sup>309</sup>.

... in the end I suppose pragmatism shifted people more towards the centre, centre-left than being outspokenly left-wing. (Street, interview 1999)

As a result of this shift, the moderate policy shift under Clark's leadership was seen as satisfactory for the majority of the 1993 caucus left. They were contented with the clearer centre-left identity of the party.

Also what may have facilitated the shift was the lack of ideological rigidity or fine definition of the ideals among the caucus left. Lange points to this problem, arguing that

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<sup>309</sup> Probably, the following comments made by a former Party President, close personal friend, and now a Cabinet colleague of Clark, Margaret Wilson, may echo the sentiment felt by the left loyalists. When asked about changes in Clark's policy views after she became a Minister, Wilson replied in 1988: 'She understands better than most what she's doing - that if you're going to play the game but you want to be ultra pure in principle, then you won't ever be a player. She knows what the important principles are... if people feel disappointed then it should be in the system and what it requires, not in Helen' (Legat, 1988: 92).

in the caucus where orthodox economic policies had become a dominant philosophy, what this group managed to come up with was, at best, loose ideas, and nothing more.

There were enough political scientists in the caucus to know what social democracy is, but they are none of them social democrats. Members of the caucus who aren't wholly consumed by self-interest have some rough idea of what helps and what doesn't help the people they are supposed to represent. This is as far as it goes. All of this applies to me. (Lange 1999b)

Of course, if one does not have concrete and precise views, s/he is more susceptible to persuasion by those with such views. Moreover, the readiness to listen and modify one's own views is expected to increase if the persuasion comes from the leader whom s/he trusts.

What Clark accomplished has an interesting implication for the study. She proved that a leader could modify his/her loyalists' expectations when there was a cleavage between them and what s/he could realistically achieve. Conversely, this indicates that loyalists' expectations were not rigid and inflexible. Because the loyalists' support for Clark was formed around their understanding of and trust in her, they were prepared to make necessary adjustments to their original expectations in support of her leadership.

### **The nature of *positive* support**

It is noteworthy that *positive* support for Clark did not turn her loyalists into her blind followers. Instead, according to some loyalists, they retained the capacity to criticise her leadership performance whenever they saw necessary. This was a marked difference from the Moore loyalists. Judith Tizard, who had known Clark on a personal basis for more than 24 years<sup>310</sup>, refers to herself as Clark's 'extremely critical friend', adding:

... over these three years when he [Moore] was the leader, he occasionally would say things like, 'It's good to have uncritical friends' and then I thought: 'Shit. Show me one.' I've never been an uncritical friend of Helen. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

Another loyalist, Maharey, also argues that he did not hesitate to criticise Clark occasionally, especially regarding her disinterest in increasing her personal popularity. While having no doubt about her overall leadership abilities, he came to the view that her only weakness was her not being a 'classic popular leader'. After devoting strong loyalty to the leader in the caucus by defending the embattled leader from internal critics, he felt entitled to express his opinions to Clark.

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<sup>310</sup> Tizard traces back the origin of her own political career to her candidacy for the local Power Board in 1977, a decision strongly encouraged by Clark. At one stage during her university lecturer years, Clark was living with Tizard's parents in Auckland. Based upon such a long and close friendship, Tizard describes Clark as 'like a sister' (Tizard, interview, 1998).

... I had just spent an awful lot of time supporting her, and at a personal level that position of me in the caucus was probably [that of] her major supporter. So, you know, in the sense of personal energy and time, effort, and stress and so on, her leadership cost me a lot. Supporting her cost me a lot. So, I also felt [that] that gave me the right to say to her: 'It isn't working, Helen'. I remember Ian Fraser saying to her on television... that: 'If you want to be Prime Minister, you've got to be popular. You've got to get some numbers in the polls, personally.' And... she said: 'I think that's wrong. I think what's important is [that] the party gets the numbers. And I become the Prime Minister on the basis of the place. I'm a team player.' And I said to her after the interview again... : 'I just think you are wrong, you know. If you think you can... somehow run the party as the thing that people vote for, modern politics isn't about that. Politics has never been about that... certainly not now. If you're not popular, we're not going to make it. We'll get the numbers OK, but the bit that gets us into being government, those extra sort of ten points come from you.' So, we always had sort of fairly robust discussions about things. But they were not discussions of my doubt about her ability... (Maharey, interview, 1998)

However, Maharey adds that his input was not always appreciated by the leader.

[However]... at times she didn't treat me very nicely because I used to say these things. It was me wanting to give her clear feedback on what might make a difference in, like, television performance, style of speaking... not that I'm, you know, any bloody expert. But just ... you watch someone whom you support going through this crap everyday, you start to want to say: 'Well, look, maybe they have got a point. So, let's try correcting that'. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

In turn, Clark's readiness to listen to such criticisms - whether she accepted them or not - impressed Maharey and further bolstered his loyalty to the leader.

... it is awful being the leader of a party... it is just a full-on, you know... when times are bad, you're it, and when times are good, you're it. So, it's great when it's going well, but it's awful when it is going the other way. And she had that for two and half years. So, in that climate, Helen's like me, Helen would say: 'What do you think about this?' - it wasn't easy. So, I think it's just another sign of her strength that she and I still get on enormously well. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

There was no question that the loyalists' support for Clark was solid when her leadership was tested in May/June 1996. However, was their *positive* support as reliable as it has been hypothesised? If the loyalists were not blind followers, they must have had limits to the extent to which their support could go. The simplest way to find the answer to this question appears to be to identify the circumstances under which they would have considered changing their positions.

The loyalists admit that their *positive* support was not unconditional. For instance, Dyson says: '... I'm not a person who is so besotted with loyalty to anyone that I'd say I'd never change, that's silly' (Dyson, interview, 1998). Nevertheless, the scenarios that the Clark loyalists provide in which Clark could have no longer relied on their support are best characterised by their unlikelihood. For instance, Judith Tizard notes: '... if she goes completely barmy, I wouldn't support her' (Tizard, interview, 1998). In less direct words, another MP states:

It would only be for policy. You know, if suddenly Helen had an attack of the jitters and decided to side with the more right wing views. ...If [she] suddenly decided that we actually can corporatise the health system, the education system. I mean she's not going to do these things, I can say. I can say this with absolute assurance that it's not going to happen, but if there was a real shift in policy so that we moved back into the centre or even beyond, then I wouldn't support her for the leadership. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Ruth Dyson's view is remarkably similar. She says that she would not have supported Clark:

... If Helen wasn't performing as the leader in the way that I expected in a leader... It would take a bit. I mean I'm not a fickle person with loyalty. But yeah, if she... suddenly started behaving quite differently or sort of signed up to the Business Roundtable views or did something extraordinary, had a personality change, then yes, I probably would. (Dyson, interview, 1998)

Radical ideological shifts and behavioural changes are also listed by Richard Northey as the possible causes for his support change.

I think if there were things in her behaviour that she started promoting... policy proposals that were... you know... strange, inappropriate, or too right wing, that just didn't hold together... [that] would be the main thing that would stop me supporting her. (Northey, interview, 1998)

And how likely does he think that would happen? 'I don't. That's my expectation. She's pretty predictable, which is very different from Mike Moore who is not predictable sometimes' (Northey, interview, 1998).

Steve Maharey pledges that he would have supported Clark as long as she wanted to remain the leader, adding:

Because I was so closely involved with her to see at least over those five days [before the 1993 leadership change], I feel that as long as she wants to be Leader, I'll support her. Because I also do trust Helen to be a person that will know when she's ready to give it up. And clearly, I don't think it was during those three years and she was right. But I think when the time comes, she will be one of the people who is wise enough to say: 'I'm off.' And I trust her to do that. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Judith Tizard also trusts that Clark would know the time to leave the leadership without external pressures. Although she cannot foresee such a situation ever arising, Tizard would not hesitate to vote against Clark if she became incapable of making the right judgement on her fate.

... [she] will know when to go. So I can't imagine ever having to vote against her. I also can't imagine ever having to do what David Caygill had to do to Bill Rowling and say: 'It's time to go, Bill'. But if I did think it was time for her to go, I would tell her that. I hope it doesn't [come to that] because it would indicate that Helen had lost her grip on what's happening in the world. No,... I can't ever imagine needing to vote against her. But what I have to say is if I thought there

was a dramatically better... leader for the party, and Helen was trying to hang on, yes, I would probably vote against her. But I would tell her I would do that. But as I say, I can't imagine it ever happening because the other thing is that Helen has a really good grasp of politics and knows the damage [her refusal to go might cause]. She has love and passion for the party. (Tizard, interview, 1998)

What has become clear, once again, from these statements is the loyalists' *positive* support based upon their profound knowledge of and trust in Clark as a person. Unless such trust was breached, their support would have continued. Of course, such a situation, by their admission, was highly unlikely to materialise. In other words, Clark could rely on her loyalists' support even during the most testing times.

### **Uncommitted supporters**

Like the 1993 situation, the distinction between the two sub-groups – pragmatic supporters and waverers – existed in 1996. The first group comprised of Braybrooke and Lange, while the latter appeared to consist of Chris Carter, Philip Field, and Janet Mackey. Both groups' support reliability from Clark's viewpoint was less than that of loyalists; they at least had notable concerns over Clark's leadership and considered the potential merits/demerits of a leadership change, when Clark was challenged. However, notable differences between the two groups were found in terms of their rationale for taking positions and the support reliability.

### **Pragmatic supporters**

This group of MPs decided to support Clark for either of the two following reasons.

#### **1) Antagonism towards the challenge**

Firstly, there was the feeling that the leadership challenge was ill-timed and poorly thought through. Braybrooke says that he opposed the potential coup because of the belief that such a move was 'wrong' (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). Apart from his growing respect and sympathy for Clark, this former Moore loyalist found the challenge disagreeable for the 'stupid' manner in which it was mounted. He was especially critical of the subtlety of the overall approach, which (together with the Clark supporters' leak to the media) eventually led to a public display of disunity:

I mean if you are going to have a coup, then you have to organise one. Because you only normally get one hit, and they went about it all wrong way... (Braybrooke, interview, 1998)

#### **2) The lack of acceptable alternative leaders**

The second reason was, in a sense, the reverse of the 1993 situation (see Chapter 5). At that time, the 1993 pragmatic Clark supporters' decision to vote for her was based upon the fact that she was 'the' alternative leader with best chance to beat Moore, whom they were keen to depose. This time, for Lange (one of the 1993 pragmatic supporters), there

were no acceptable candidates who could improve the situation to his liking. Therefore, while disillusioned with the party's lack of leftward policy shift under Clark's leadership, he had no other option but to adhere to the incumbent. When asked to explain the reason for his support for Clark in 1996, he bluntly says: 'There was no alternative' (Lange, 1999b). In his eyes, any candidate from the right/moderate including Moore would simply worsen the problem and thus was not a viable option. From the left/centre-left groups, although names such as Lianne Dalziel and Steve Maharey were often mentioned as potential leaders by the media (Clifton, 1995b; Speden, 1995), neither of them had built a sufficient support base within the caucus. More importantly, neither of them was interested in challenging Clark.

### Reliability of *pragmatic* support

The support reliability of 1996 pragmatic supporters turned out to be, as in 1993, high. This was ironic considering that both Braybrooke and Lange had been two of the most vocal and frequent critics of the Clark leadership (see Chapter 6). Braybrooke's feeling against the potential leadership change was so strong that he states that he would not have provided support to any challenger including his old friend, Moore (Braybrooke, interview, 1998). For Lange, no matter how frustrated he was, there was nobody else to change his support to. In short, their support for Clark was 'entrapped'. Although neither of those MPs shared the Clark loyalists' enthusiasm for her leadership, the leader could have relied upon their votes if the issue had been taken to a vote.

### **Waverers**

On the other hand, waverers did not have strong pre-disposed opinions about the virtue of a leadership change or about potential alternative leaders. While they may have some inclinations towards either side, they were open towards suggestions and persuasions from both camps. For example, one MP admits that s/he thought 'there were some valid concerns about some of the things that were happening with Helen Clark's leadership'. However, after consulting with both sides, s/he 'didn't necessarily think that changing [the leader]... was a very constructive thing to do right before an election' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

If it had gone to the vote, I would have voted against it. I talked to both sides. I had lunch with one side one day, and lunch the other side the next day. But, no. When the numbers were down, my name would have been on Helen Clark's list. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

Although the number of MPs who belonged to this group was small, their support was crucial for Clark's survival for one simple reason: the Clark loyalists and pragmatic supporters did not constitute the majority in the caucus. So, what variables affected

decisions in Clark's favour? At least three 'external' factors seemed to influence their decisions. The first was the EPLP organisation and the pressure which it applied to the waverers. The second was the formal leadership selection procedure, and the third was the (unclear) identity of the alternative leaders.

#### 1) The party organisation support

Strong loyalty to Clark existed in the EPLP. As the then President, Michael Hirschfeld noted: 'Helen's support was overwhelming in the party' (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998). Unlike when Moore's leadership came under pressure in 1993, the EPLP, especially its hierarchy stood firmly behind the incumbent. Although its power over the fate of the PLP leader was curtailed by the fact that it did not have a direct say in a vote, the 1996 situation nevertheless clearly displayed its considerable influence over the Parliamentary representatives. Hirschfeld's view was that the pro-change group 'may have vastly underestimated the party's response'. He assesses the EPLP's influence in the following terms:

I think it was quite significant. I think that some MPs got a very clear picture that members of the party did recognise just how damaging this division was to the party, and that the party members were prepared to take the chance [and stay with Clark]... (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

Moore admits that the pressure which the EPLP put on the pro-change MPs was a key factor in swaying support away from him. Asked why he thinks some of his colleagues allegedly changed their positions, he replies:

Because they were scared of the attitude of the party hierarchy. That they wouldn't get selected in their seats, they wouldn't get on the list... they would be finished politically. (Moore, interview, 1998)

However, one may raise the question: 'If the EPLP's influence was so significant, why could it not persuade pro-change MPs to change their views?' 'Why did the EPLP's pressure not apply equally to all the MPs?' Hirschfeld explained that the party organisation's influence varied according to individual parliamentarians' circumstances such as:

... How much people were locked into personal relationships, and how isolated people felt without party support... Simply their feeling of personal strength and worth and how much they relied on wider networks or [whether they] were part of close networks on either side in the debate. Those who were in the middle and a little isolated and unsure were the most easily moved. (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

Each MP's sensitivity to the EPLP's pressures was also affected by the characteristics of their electorates. As one MP notes, those without safe seats were more likely to be waverers.



I think a marginal MP was more likely to change their support, and say: 'I was wrong, I was wrong [about the 1993 leadership change]. Vote for me. I'm now going to support Mike Moore.' The pressure was much more. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

In some electorates, the local party members had quite different views from the party hierarchy on who should be the leader of the PLP. One staunch Moore supporter attests:

In my electorate, local party members... if they had been given a secret ballot, there is no doubt in my mind they would've overwhelmingly supported Mike Moore. No doubt in my mind. Most of the party hierarchy people who hold office, who represent affiliated unions in the party's Council and so on, they'd probably have stuck with Helen. But amongst the rank and file it is a different story. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

However, it was ultimately the public who would determine the MPs' fate<sup>311</sup> at an election. After the five frontbenchers' approach to Clark was leaked to the media, some caucus members encountered a strong backlash from the public (Barker, interview, 1998).

It is not hard to assume that if both the local party organisation and the constituents expressed their unhappiness about another leadership change, they would be swayed against it. Conversely, if MPs felt their electoral fortune would improve by ignoring the messages from the party hierarchy, because neither the local party members nor voters were in favour of Clark, they would be more likely to back a new leader.

## 2) The leadership selection procedure

The caucus rules stipulated that in order to have a leadership change outside the regular leadership review, a notice needed to be given to the caucus at least one week in advance. Having fulfilled this condition, the caucus would vote on whether there would be a leadership vote. If such a motion was carried, then the caucus was to choose the next leader from available candidates. This procedure did work to the incumbent's advantage.

As documented in Chapter 6, some of the pro-change MPs argue that despite their having failed to obtain sufficient support to clear the first hurdle - winning the motion on having a leadership vote - the result of the second vote would have been far from a foregone conclusion. While such an interpretation of the situation is strongly disputed

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<sup>311</sup> Jackson reported that although the number of challenges to incumbent politicians' candidacy by local party organisations has increased over the years in New Zealand, they are still rarely successful. 'In the small, New Zealand style parliamentary system in particular, the candidate is regarded first and foremost as a committed member of a cohesive team supporting or opposed to the government, rather than as a local representative. As a result the candidate selection procedure tends to be heavily weighted towards incumbency' (Jackson, 1994: 269-270).

by other MPs from both sides (and it is impossible to verify either argument), those pro-change MPs are adamant.

If their view is correct, why were some caucus members reluctant to support the first vote, while being prepared to support an alternative leader in the second vote? One pro-change MP says that some MPs 'would wait and see and then vote for the side, once they are certain who is going to win' (Anonymous, interview, 1998). Cullen adds that they are those who 'actually don't want to face the issue if they can avoid it'<sup>312</sup> (Cullen, interview, 1998). Further, he explains that if one was susceptible to the EPLP's pressure, s/he was more inclined to take this non-committal position.

... there were a lot of people who knew that the party organisations weren't keen on change, even though they thought it was necessary. And therefore, by voting not to have a vote [and then support an alternative in the second vote], they'd [had] satisfied, if you like, both sides of their obligations. (Cullen, interview, 1998)

What these points suggest is that if the first motion had been carried despite their vote against it, those MPs would have felt their obligation to the party organisation was fulfilled, and they would have felt free to cast their vote in any way they wished at the second vote. Logically, no Clark supporters should have supported the first motion as it would have put her leadership position at risk. Therefore, if the majority of the caucus had agreed to have a vote on the leadership, that would have indicated that Clark did not command sufficient support among her colleagues. Although whether any alternative candidate could have secured more numbers than Clark would have (assuming that she would have stood for the second vote) in the leadership contest is speculative, if the tide of support was moving away from the incumbent, why should waverers have stayed with the losing side?

When Moore was challenged in 1993, not enough MPs were willing to vote for a leadership vote, either. But, when the first motion was unexpectedly seconded by Moore himself, the majority of the Labour caucus decided to support Clark. While it is still debatable whether the situation was the same in 1996, it appears quite plausible that Labour's leadership 'two-step' voting procedure inherently favours the incumbent by deterring waverers who were wary of a backlash from the EPLP (and probably the public as well) for supporting a leadership change.

### 3) The alternative leaders

The issues related to the alternative leaders worked to Clark's advantage not only amongst a pragmatic supporter (Lange) but also waverers. There were two problems for the pro-change group in persuading the latter group to come their way.

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<sup>312</sup> Moore is far less charitable in describing the same group of his colleagues. '[Y]ou've got to realise you are dealing with a lot of weak, cowardly people' (Moore, interview, 1998).

First, there was no firm confirmation of the candidacy of the alternative leader. Although throughout the leadership crisis, all the other possible candidates such as Cullen, King, Goff, and Sutton were all dismissive of their own candidacy (Laugesen, 1996b), rumours about the identity of the alternative continued to circulate. As described in Chapter 6, this lack of clarity seriously undermined the credibility of the pro-change group.

If there was no unified candidate, the waverers could be vulnerable to persuasion by the Clark supporters to stay with her. After all, if the pro-change MPs could not agree on who should replace the incumbent, how could it be possible to guarantee that the situation would improve under the new leader? For example, Maharey remembers how he defended Clark.

I didn't defend her by saying: 'Look. She's wonderful. She's fantastic. She's marvellous.' I just said to them: 'Look. We're seventeen or twenty weeks away from the election. Who have you got that's better than her [sic]? How do you think you would install [him/her] in the caucus and get that person positioned in the public's mind?' And 'Why do you think he [or she] is better than she [Clark] is?' And they couldn't tell me who the alternative was. They had no plan as to how they would make it acceptable to change the leader so close to an election. And they couldn't identify the attributes that they thought any prospective candidate might have. And I said to them: 'Well, game set and match, isn't it? What are you asking this caucus to do? You are coming along... asking her to step aside for an unknown leader, who has no plan. And you can't even define what it is that you think would make a difference as well... My position is that I don't do it.' (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Second, as Lange did, some MPs found the candidacy of the most likely alternative, Moore, unacceptable. Those MPs had come to the view by May/June 1996 that he was unsuitable to lead the party again, due to his behaviour following the loss of his leadership. Besides, returning to the old leader who had been openly rejected by the majority of his colleagues could have let the party become a target of public ridicule. In that case, the party's credibility – let alone its electoral chances – could have been irreversibly damaged (Maharey, interview, 1998). One of the waverers agreed with this view.

... in my opinion it is absurd to go back to him. I always felt it absolutely absurd when some of them said 'We've changed our mind yet again, I'm now going back to what we had'. There is no credibility down that path at all. (Anonymous, interview, 1998)

In the end, the waverers decided to retain their support for Clark. The above MP's conclusion was 'that Helen Clark would perform magnificently in an election. She's more intelligent, more articulate, and better informed than any other political leader' (Anonymous, interview, 1998).

### **Reliability of *wavering* support**

As in 1993, the 1996 waverers' support for Clark was not certain. Although each MP's support reliability may have varied, in general, this group's position was more flexible than that of loyalists or pragmatic supporters. If some of the above factors had been different, it is quite possible that their support might have been placed elsewhere.

### **How did Clark succeed and fail in satisfying the expectations and eradicating the concerns?**

#### **Success**

Clark's survival in 1996 was due to her success in retaining the majority of her 1993 supporters and converting some pragmatic supporters. This, in turn, was accomplished through meeting their expectations. At the same time, she had no success in converting her 1993 opponents into her supporters or consolidating some uncommitted supporters' positions. In Chapter 5, the reasons why Moore failed to satisfy the expectations and alleviate the concerns after the 1990 election were examined. It is worthwhile to study briefly the reasons for her success. A comparison to Moore offers a useful perspective.

Clark had had two advantages over her predecessor in terms of the nature of the given expectations: stability and suitability. Moore was elected by electorally threatened, panic stricken MPs<sup>313</sup> only a few weeks before the 1990 election with one specific task - to minimise Labour's inevitable election defeat. When the election was over, Moore was given a new set of expectations by the new caucus, a significant minority (24.14%) of which was not involved in his selection in 1990. As discussed in Chapter 5, those new tasks, however, required different skills and attributes from those for which he was elected as the leader. As a result, Moore struggled with the tasks, and ultimately was seen by his supporters as having failed.

Unlike Moore, Clark was chosen by her supporters to lead the party for the following three years (and beyond), by the caucus which would spend the entire term with her. This gave Clark the luxury which her predecessor did not have - the stability of the followers' expectations (as well as the stability of the support composition). Although the 1993 Clark supporters' expectations did change, at least for some MPs - as the 1996 election came closer, the importance of winning it increased - such a change was minor in comparison to what Moore experienced. Also, the circumstances in which she was chosen allowed Clark's general suitability as the leader in a wider context to come into consideration in the alternative candidate selection process. When a leadership coup occurred in 1993, the pro-change group's concerns were directly linked to Moore's perceived leadership problems. The anti-Moore MPs' concerns later

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<sup>313</sup> For instance, Clark commented on the 1990 leadership change: 'The only thing I regret is being part of the moral panic at the end of 1990. I think I was panicked - everybody was - and that's not like me.' (Chisholm, 1995: C1)

transformed into expectations from a new leader. They looked for a person who could provide better leadership and establish Labour's new identity as a centre-left party, which was expected to bring Labour an election victory in 1996. Clark emerged as the alternative candidate specifically because she was regarded by this group as best equipped to meet those expectations. In other words, there was a strong match between her and the given task from the beginning.

#### a) Ideological beliefs

It is much easier for a leader to pursue policy directions if s/he believes in them. This was a case for Clark during the 1993~1996 period. As already noted, her stance on some issues such as economic policy had become more conservative during her parliamentary years, she was not seen by her supporters as someone without principles. In one journalist's words, she was '... pragmatic but principled: someone prepared to shift ground, not stance, in the face of certain irreversible realities' (Welch, 1990: 16). In 1988, Clark stressed: 'I think my basic value structures which were set in the late 60s are still pretty much intact' (Legat, 1988: 90). As a long time, self-confessed social democrat (Legat, 1988: 92), through the parliamentary years, she had upheld a belief in accessible state services in housing and health as well as support for minority rights<sup>314</sup>.

To further Clark's advantage, by the time she became the leader in 1993, her policy views were actually in tune with the direction which the majority of her supporters and opponents hoped for. In other words, there was a powerful congruence between that and Clark's own view of the necessary policy shift. Maryan Street describes Clark's own stance in 1993 in the following terms:

She certainly wanted Labour to be clearer than it was. I don't think she wanted a radical leftward policy shift. I certainly think she wanted a distinctively leftward policy shift, but not a radical one. ...This is not overthrowing the mechanism of capitalism stuff. This is a distinctive left of centre shift that she wanted when Mike had very much moved towards the centre in a way that made us indistinguishable from anybody else, really. ...And of course MMP required that we be a lot clearer as well. And it certainly gave those people who didn't fit us the opportunity to go away and start something of their own. But I think she certainly wanted to clarify the position, she did want to move to a different place from where we had got to during the 93 election campaign which was insecure... (Street, interview, 1999)

Richard Northey further attests: 'From what I heard her advocating at caucus and caucus committees, she has got most of what she publicly advocated for'. He further adds that he cannot recall any occasion on which her proposal for policy was rejected by the caucus during the period (Northey, interview, 1998). Indeed, after the 1996 election, Clark expressed her satisfaction with Labour's policy achievement under her own guidance. She told a journalist that she thought Labour's policies presented in the 1996

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<sup>314</sup> For her maiden speech, see NZPD, vol. 443: 560-564.

election manifesto were 'about right' and that there would be little room for any big policy alterations (Wilson, 1997).

#### b) Skills

The key to Clark's success in delivering better leadership for caucus unity was her 'inclusive' leadership. Unlike Moore, his successor did not need to hastily adopt a leadership style and skills in response to newly imposed expectations and concerns of which she had been a long-time advocate and employer. In 1989, she said: 'I felt a greater good comes from people trying to work together, rather than a solo act which might be gratifying to one's ego but doesn't advance the total cause a great deal'. She also said: 'Every person who was honest about their role in any political party would say the same: you give up a lot of what you would do as an individual if you accept the discipline of working within a system' (Clark, 1989: W1).

At the same time, Clark's thoroughness, unquestionable intelligence (which many of her supporters have already mentioned), and clinically analytical skills all suited her role in identifying the party's policy problems and leading the subsequent delicate policy refining process. On her meticulous nature, she once described her working style:

I take the view that no stone must be left unturned. And the time you didn't check something goes wrong. So I certainly won't be changing my style of work (Cocker, 1989: 35).

With regard to Clark's analytical inclinations, Judith Tizard recalled breaking the news about her cancer to her old friend during the 1993 election campaign. After bursting into tears and giving her a hug, Clark quickly regained her composure and asked Tizard about the type of cancer she was diagnosed with. Then she asked: 'How much information do you need?' with an offer to do a literature search. Tizard attested: 'Helen's response is to analyse it' (Chisholm, 1995: C2).

#### c) Personality

For steady handling of policy and caucus matters, the anti-Moore group recognised his personality as a major obstacle. Instead of his flamboyancy and erratic style, they sought a more sombre character in the new leadership. Clark was regarded as highly reliable. As she herself more recently said: 'You don't get unpredictable things from me. I'm very predictable'. 'It's important to signal your direction clearly' (Main, 1998b). Also, it had been known to her supporters prior to her becoming the leader that she was an inclusive, consensus seeker. In 1989, Clark commented: 'It's very important to be engaged in coalition and consensus building, and I've put a lot of effort into that' (Myers, 1989: 3).

What also helped Clark meet her supporters' expectations was her distaste for egocentric leadership. While ambitious<sup>315</sup> and confident, she did not view the leadership as the end in itself:

I've observed a number of people in all walks of life fight like crazy to get a leadership position without knowing what on earth they want to do with it. That's why they disappoint when they get there.

I am a leader because I have a positive agenda. I am task-oriented and issue-oriented. I am not interested in position for position's sake. I am not interested in riding roughshod over others to prove who has the most power. Negative leadership hurts everyone and there's been too much of it in this country. (H. Clark, 1996).

Clark was known as a team player, willing to observe the majority decisions even when she did not personally agree with them.

Over the years I've come to realise that you'll never get entirely your own way if you work within a system... one could have a wonderfully pure political party with only three people in it. But when you accept membership of a major political party, you accept a certain discipline, and that means that there'll be decisions made that you may not particularly like but you'll have the opportunity to be part of making other decisions that you greatly want to see made (Legat, 1988: 82).

## **Failure**

Clark's failure to eradicate the concerns and meet some of the expectations may be explained by the following factors or a combination of them.

### a) Personality

Clark's personality seemed both to assist but also work against her in meeting some of the expectations. The crucial element here was (as was in Moore's case) the leader's self-confidence. As already noted, Clark's competence was never challenged. Clark once said: 'No-one has ever attacked me on grounds of ability, because I don't think they could' (Myers, 1986: 164).

Naturally, she had a healthy self-esteem regarding her abilities, skills, and judgement.

High self-esteem and confidence in your own ability is very important. I maintain self-esteem by having absolute confidence in my ability to do a good job. (Light, 1998: 21)

The high level of self-confidence and competence caused Clark to fail to acknowledge and appreciate those with lesser and different abilities. It appeared that Clark built her expectations of others upon her own competence and areas of strengths, and some people feel that this prevented her from being truly inclusive. Her approach was, in Tizard's words: 'Basically, Helen's door is always open if you've done your work'

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<sup>315</sup> In 1986, she said: 'I'm ambitious, yes. I wouldn't be in this job if I wasn't. But I would never put everything else aside for the sake of personal ambition' (Myers, 1986: 175).

(Tizard, interview, 1998). Not many caucus members shared her competence in the areas which she valued, and as a consequence, she naturally found many of her fellow caucus members' work wanting.

A former Party President, Michael Hirschfeld, agreed that Clark's own abilities prevented her from appreciating others' efforts or their need for assistance when they struggled.

I think it's fair to say that because she has her own standards, she doesn't [always] find it easy... to work with those who don't match her own standards... I think there has been a constant problem for her to successfully team-build by getting people [recognition]... even if their work might not be up to the standards of hers... Her own standards have not made it easy for her to be as inclusive as, I think, she would want to be, to be a fully effective leader.

In my view, people work well when their work is appreciated. There is no point in appreciating work that is below people's actual ability to deliver. But providing [that] people are delivering up to their ability, then I think people need encouragement. And I'm not sure that she's been able to get all the members of her team able to do the work level because... she has greater skills than many of them... (Hirschfeld, interview, 1998)

Her self-confidence, together with a strong desire to ensure certain outcomes<sup>316</sup> made her known for being 'intense', 'demanding' (Clifton, 1996d) as well as impatient with those who did not meet her expectations<sup>317</sup>. On the latter, she once confessed:

I can't stand incompetence. I can't stand people who can't spell, who can't add up... I'm very intolerant of incompetence and I don't see why I should have to put up with it. (Smith, 1994)

The same personal characteristics seemed to be responsible for her being 'notoriously bad at delegating work'<sup>318</sup> (Clifton, 1996d) as well as for her heavy reliance on a small number of people with similar skills (such as those of logical analysis), while disregarding those with different talents (such as a 'populist instinct'). If one's self-esteem is based upon appreciation of his/her own skills and abilities, it may

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<sup>316</sup> An example of Clark's inclination is her decision to remove under-performing Lianne Dalziel, one of her supporters, from the health spokespersonship on 8 August 1997. Although the decision was explained as being made at Dalziel's request, Clark's concern about Labour's performance in the health area - one of her former Cabinet responsibilities - had been obvious for sometime. On 15 August 1996, Clark decided to take over the 'Let's fix health' campaign from Dalziel.

<sup>317</sup> This tendency was demonstrated by her open criticisms of three of her own Cabinet Ministers, Margaret Wilson, Marian Hobbs, and Dover Samuels over their performance (see Laugesen, 2000). Also indicative was her frustration, expressed after the dismissal of Samuels in late June 2000 over allegations against his past behaviour. Challenging Labour's long standing convention of Cabinet selection through caucus votes, she complained: 'As the leader of the Labour Party I would much prefer to have the National Party's rules [which allow Prime Ministers to select their own Cabinet Ministers] because it is a real limitation when you cannot select your board... It is very difficult for leaders to not be able to select a team' (Venter, 2000).

<sup>318</sup> Clark herself admitted to this problem in 1994. 'What I have to learn is that you can't do it all yourself, you have to delegate' (Nichol, 1994).



not be surprising if that person gives special preference to those with similar attributes in selecting trusted allies.

#### b. Conflicting expectations/concerns

As documented in Chapter 7, there existed irreconcilable conflicts within the expectations and concerns over Labour's policy shift upon Clark's selection. It was simply impossible for any leader to satisfy all MPs under those circumstances.

#### c. Skills and beliefs

Clark's lack of the necessary skills and beliefs was most evident in relation to the elective expectation/concern. As already pointed out by her opponents elsewhere, she lacked the essential ingredient to become a popular leader - charisma<sup>319</sup>. Although politically astute and skilful, Clark did not have Moore's skills to establish an instant emotional linkage with general voters.

At the same time, as her constant refuting of charismatic leadership indicated, she did not regard gaining personal popularity as important and felt uneasy about self-promotion<sup>320</sup>. For instance, she stated in 1995: 'It [personal popularity] doesn't particularly interest me; being respected for being able to do the job does interest me'. 'I am quite comfortable with myself and what I won't do is change myself to something I'm not to meet other people's expectations' (Chisholm, 1995: C1).

#### d. Limited resources

Another factor which may have affected Clark's performance in terms of the unity expectation was the limited resources available to Clark. With regard to some newcomers' complaints about Clark's lack of encouragement and personal support, Goff defends his leader citing her scarce time resource, the result of a heavy workload as the leader of a major party:

... it [the Leader of the Opposition] is a really hard, really demanding job with too few resources in order for you to be able to compete effectively with the

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<sup>319</sup> Colin James noted: '... if there is to be vision and transformation, charisma is a necessary ingredient of leadership' (1998: 28). On Clark, the same author described her as 'not charismatic'. (1998: 30)

<sup>320</sup> Despite these comments and her criticism of the media for focusing on women politicians' appearance, she later softened her attitudes towards the issue. She appeared in different forms of the media, one of which was a woman's magazine (in which she did the 'fashion spread'). She recalled her experience fondly: 'I loved doing it... It's like dressing-up. What do little girls do, after all? They dress up, don't they? No, I'm quite relaxed about all that' (Clifton, 1997c: 17). Nevertheless, she still seems to retain the view that it is policies, not the leader's image, which decides an election result. In July 1998 at the height of the popularity of Jenny Shipley, the first female Prime Minister, who replaced Jim Bolger in November 1997, Clark asserted: 'It doesn't matter how much personal charm Mrs Shipley may try to exude, no matter how well presented she looks, if she is offering a product that fundamentally people do not want, then it doesn't mean anything' (Rentoul, 1998).

Government. I make that point simply because Helen and any Leader of the Opposition is going to be pre-occupied with demands on them, and maybe not able to give collegial support that a person who is struggling feels they might deserve. But there's a hard world out there, and you are thrown in the deep end and you either swim or you sink. And I'm not sure that you could constantly rely on your party leader to keep throwing you a life raft if you are not swimming. You are there presumably because you can do your job and if there wasn't a strong enough relationship along the way there, then maybe the fault was on both sides of the people making the criticism. (Goff, interview, 1998)

Another veteran politician, Caygill, also suggests that the problem of a heavy reliance on a small number of MPs and advisers was linked to her limited resources in terms of time and trustworthy allies.

Well, I think much of that [criticism] is true. But I also think that it's not the least bit unusual. You could say exactly the same of David Lange. People certainly made that complaint of Norman Kirk. I suspect that they think the same of [National leaders] Jenny Shipley and thought the same of Jim Bolger. The truth is that the leader of a party is very busy. It is lonely at the top in the sense that there are not a lot of people who you can readily confide in. All sorts of things happen that you can't share widely with other people. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

#### e. Clark's limited control over realisation of the elective expectation

Clark's opponents and wavering supporters alike used the opinion poll ratings as a gauge of her ability to win an election. The problem for Clark was that she had no direct control over the poll results. As noted in the previous chapter, a series of her efforts to improve her personal (and eventually the party's) popularity were in vain. Those failures were at least partially due to Clark's lack of skills and personality. Moreover, many variables which were likely to influence public perceptions of the party and leader such as the media treatment, the state of economy, the performance of other political parties were beyond Clark's control.

#### f. Followers' susceptibility to changes

Clark's failure to convert many of her 1993 opponents was due to her failure to popularise the party and herself. However, even if she had been successful at this task, there was a question mark over the extent to which they might have changed their stances towards their embattled leader. For her opponents, first and foremost the leader had to possess the ability to win an election. Although they mostly regarded Clark's general leadership skills positively, those matters were secondary concerns to them nevertheless. The only way that Clark could have won their support was to raise the party's (and her own) popularity. Nothing else could have achieved that conversion. Therefore, even if she had managed to turn those 1993 opponents into her supporters, she could not have relaxed. Those MPs would still have continued to base their judgement of her worthiness on the poll results. The best Clark could have hoped for

was them becoming uncommitted supporters. *Positive* support would have not be forthcoming from this group.

### **Conclusion**

In analysing Clark's support compositions of 1993 and 1996, this chapter has again verified the key hypotheses of the study. Included is the proposition that changes and non-changes of leaders' support compositions can be explained through the leader's success/failure at: a) meeting his/her followers' expectations and b) dealing with her/his opponents' concerns.

Clark's failure to expand her support base after 1993 has been attributed to the fact that a) she failed to eradicate the general concern over her perceived inability to popularise the party; and b) therefore she could not satisfy some of the 1993 uncommitted supporters. With regard to her 1993 opponents, dissatisfaction persisted despite her success in eliminating the other concerns through careful and prudent leadership. While these efforts were accepted and appreciated by the majority of her opponents, her failure to allay the crucial concern led them to believe that another leadership change was the only solution to their diminishing electoral fortune.

In the meantime, two groups of the 1993 uncommitted supporters felt their expectations had been unfulfilled by Clark's leadership. The first group, a few left-wing caucus members, found both Clark's generous treatment of her 1993 opponents (especially those with moderate/right-wing views) and Labour's moderate policy changes disappointing. The second group, consisting of the newer intakes, realised that Clark's leadership style was different from their ideal image. They also became increasingly impatient with Clark's lack of success in raising the party's popularity.

In contrast, the assessment of Clark's leadership was quite different among her loyalists. In their views, the leader had largely satisfied their expectations. Clark had provided a reliable, fair, and cohesive leadership style, replacing Moore's problematic leadership. Similarly, she carefully led the re-fashioning process of Labour's policies and identity. Clearer and more detailed policies, as well as a more pronounced centre-left identity, were produced as a consequence. With regard to the expectation of winning the 1996 election, as professional politicians, they were naturally concerned about the opinion polls. However, they adhered to the view that Clark was the best leader for the party. They attributed the party's popularity problem to other factors and rejected the idea of replacing her as a solution to the problem. In their views, it was premature to make a judgement on Clark's ability to deliver on this expectation while there were still several more months to go before the election.

### **The importance of the original support composition**

While Clark's leadership was constantly subjected to media speculation on her future as well as criticisms from some caucus members (mostly loyal Moore supporters), she nevertheless survived the serious challenge in 1996.

It appears that one of the crucial factors in her survival was her support compositions, which were characterised by a large proportion of loyalists among her supporters. In 1993, fifteen MPs with *positive* support for the new leader constituted exactly one third of the whole caucus of 45. When Clark was challenged in May/June 1996, the number of her loyalists grew to 18, increasing its proportion to 43.90% of the then smaller caucus (after the defections of four Moore supporters) of 41. Although eighteen members were still short of the outright majority, they provided a strong base from which the troubled leader could defend her position. To win the numbers, the Clark camp needed to secure only four more votes. Such a small number enabled them to concentrate their lobbying and resources effectively on those who were most susceptible to their persuasion.

Clark's success in retaining her loyalists resonated a similar success by Moore during the 1990 and 1993 period. This high reliability of the loyalists' support for Clark was not surprising. The Clark loyalists, like their Moore counterparts, formed their strong support based upon their understanding and sufficient knowledge of the leader as an individual. Trust and faith in her were also commonly shared within this group. They knew what she was capable of, and therefore their expectations of her were realistic and likely to be fulfilled.

Moreover, this chapter has indicated that even when loyalists' original expectations were at variance with a leader's intentions, s/he can avoid loyalists' disappointment by altering their original expectations to suit her/his action. Upon her election, some of Clark's loyalists on the left expected a marked policy shift to the left under her leadership. Quickly realising the impossibility of meeting that expectation, she persuaded those loyalists to change their positions to accommodate the political reality in which she had to operate. The effect of such a change should not be underestimated. The resultant policy shift, which fell short of their original expectations, was perceived by this group as a success and meeting their 'new' expectations. It is hard to imagine any other group but her loyalists so willingly changing their expectations so that the leader's action could be perceived favourably. It appears that their profound trust in her and strong desire to see her succeed allowed Clark to modify their viewpoints.

This finding has an interesting implication for the study. It has become obvious that loyalists' support is highly reliable, as predicted in Chapter 2. However, what has not been accurately predicted was the nature of the relationship between a leader and loyalists. Clark's case study has demonstrated that it is *not* a zero-sum relationship;

when leaders fail to realise their loyalists' expectations in the complete, original form, the loyalists' support would *not* instantly diminish. Also, Clark's loyalists' response to Labour's popularity problem suggests that when the leader struggles to meet their expectations, loyalists may ascribe the blame to somewhere else. In addition, the conditions that they suggested for halting their support for Clark - such as radical personality change - were extremely unlikely to materialise. These findings all indicate that loyalists' *positive* support is even more reliable than originally assumed.

In contrast, Clark's uncommitted supporters' support has been documented as less reliable. This can be explained for several reasons. Firstly, as their support was not based upon personal faith in Clark as a person (unlike loyalists' *positive* support), the uncommitted supporters were less forgiving when Clark's performance fell short of their original expectations. Lange's refusal to accept Clark's argument that caucus unity should be given priority over ideological purity was a case in point. Unlike his loyalist colleagues, he did not have a particular desire to ensure Clark's survival as the leader. If somebody else could have produced a better policy result, s/he would have gained Lange's support without hesitation.

Secondly, the MPs who remained non-loyal supporters or became Clark opponents during the 1993-1996 period contained a high proportion of the 1993 new intake. This did not seem to be a mere coincidence. The new intake did not possess much in-depth knowledge of Clark as a parliamentarian when they were forced to choose their future leader in December 1993. Without such information, they may have formed unrealistic expectations which had little correspondence with Clark's personality and strengths.

Similarly, those parliamentary novices were unfamiliar with the dynamics of politics, which might shape one's view of the necessary skills for a leader. If this was the case, their subsequent experiences in Parliament may have altered their ideal image (prototype) of the leader and thus their preferred person for the job.

Although the Clark case study has confirmed uncommitted supporters' less reliable status in comparison to loyalists it has also documented the inadequacy of one classification for this group suggested in the previous chapter. It has been suggested that there were actually two groups, distinguishable according to the levels of support reliability, in this category. In order to reflect this reality, this chapter again has sub-categorised uncommitted supporters into waverers (with wavering support) and pragmatic supporters (with *pragmatic* support).

The former group was genuinely uncertain about which leadership candidate they should support. The factors that influenced those MPs in Clark's favour were: a) the EPLP's pressure; b) Labour's formal leadership selection procedure, and: c) the (unclear) identity of the alternative leader. Without them, their support could have gone either way. On the other hand, the stance of pragmatic supporters in 1993 and 1996 was

unambiguous. On both occasions, they supported Clark. Their decision was due to either the lack of other acceptable alternative leaders or the feelings against the leadership change itself. In this 'entrapped' situation, unlike waverers, their support for Clark was unintentionally reliable from Clark's point of view.

All the above findings underline the importance of the initial support composition for new leaders. The higher the proportion of loyalists in the caucus, the less vulnerable the leaders' future will be. Conversely, if leaders obtain the top position based upon support from uncommitted supporters (especially waverers), vulnerability will increase. Needless to say, the leadership vulnerability increases with the number of opponents in the caucus. The importance of the original support composition is heightened even further by the difficulty of converting uncommitted supporters and opponents into supporters. Despite Clark's conscious effort to prove her worthiness, her success between 1993 and 1996 was restricted to converting three new loyalists (from being pragmatic supporters) and one pragmatic supporter (from being an opponent).

### **The leader's ability to win an election**

This chapter has also re-confirmed the importance of the ability to win an election for a Labour leader. The force behind the five frontbenchers' approach and the subsequent scramble was their concern over the potential loss of the 1996 election. In this sense, the 1996 situation was similar to Labour's leadership changes in 1966 (Nordmeyer to Kirk), 1983 (Rowling to Lange), and 1990 (Palmer to Moore), at which the unpopular incumbents were replaced by more popular alternatives. For example, Caygill likens the 1996 situation to that of 1990:

I think what happened in 1996 was quite similar to what happened at the end of 1990. We were coming up to an election and people were concerned about the possibility that the Labour Party might lose again. I think after some very intense lobbying, people... some people were persuaded that Mike [Moore] or perhaps Michael Cullen would do better than Helen. (Caygill, interview 1998)

In relation to the importance of the leader's ability to win an election, two points need to be mentioned. Firstly, it appears that the caucus members' leadership selection criteria were not uniform. Those who were in favour of a leadership change saw installation of a popular leader as the key to arresting the party's popularity decline. They accordingly used a candidate's (potential) personal popularity as a (or 'the') primary selection yardstick. This was evident in Moore's re-emergence as an alternative leader. While his shortcomings as a possible leader had been well exposed through his ill-disciplined behaviour after his dumping, his supporters were either prepared to overlook or not be particularly concerned about them.

At the same time, a small group of MPs who were in support of a leadership change such as Annette King, thought that other leadership qualities should not be ignored.

Unlike the Moore supporters, they regarded Moore as unsuitable for re-gaining the top job. While this group retained popular appeal as the most important leadership selection criterion, other factors obviously carried some weight for them.

Other leadership selection criteria were even more important to the Clark loyalists. In their minds, other 'intra-caucus' leadership qualities such as articulation of policies, fair personnel management, reliability, and inclusiveness were not secondary matters in leadership selection. They believed that Labour could win only with sound policies (which reflected 'true Labour values') and their accurate and unambiguous representation, which were achievable only by a leader with those 'intra-caucus' qualities. If led by a leader without those attributes, the party would look erratic, inconsistent, and lack a clear identity. According to the Clark loyalists' assessment, they would simply erode public confidence in the party, ultimately costing Labour's election chances. Perhaps it was not surprising that the Clark loyalists attributed the cause of Labour's election loss in 1993 to the then leader, Moore, who lacked those 'intra-caucus' leadership attributes. For those MPs, the 'extra-caucus' qualities such as charisma and public appeal were at best desirable pluses but by no means were the substitute for the 'intra-caucus' qualities.

The varying of the leadership selection criteria in the caucus was not new. Although he did not have the majority, Rowling enjoyed solid support from a number of the caucus members when he accepted the inevitability of his defeat and agreed to renounce the leadership. Similarly, the majority of caucus members were reportedly behind Palmer when he decided to vacate the top position without proving his strength in a caucus vote. Clark's victory in 1996 was further evidence that personal popularity alone cannot guarantee his/her success. To be a leader, s/he needs to prove to the caucus that there is more that s/he can offer in the top position.

Secondly, despite the variety of leadership selection criteria, the ability to win an election is still important to all caucus members. The 1996 Clark loyalists were not oblivious to the likely fate of themselves and the party at the coming General Election. Their desire to win the election and preserve their seats was as strong as that of their colleagues with different views on Clark's leadership. The difference between the loyalists and the other caucus members was the former's absolute faith in Clark and her abilities, even in the face of a serious popularity crisis. Although it might have seemed to others that supporting Clark would be electorally suicidal, the uniformly shared view in this group was that the party would fare best at the election under her guidance. In other words, the Clark loyalists and her opponents were divided over the opinion as to *who* could maximise Labour's electoral fortune, *not* over the importance of winning an election. There is no evidence to suggest that the Clark loyalists thought that the party

would lose the coming election, or wondered whether the party would perform better under somebody else's leadership.

The analysis of Clark's success in retaining the leadership has produced interesting, and sometimes unexpected, results. With the two case studies having been concluded, the remaining task of the study is to examine the overall validity of the propositions against the findings.



## CHAPTER 9

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

The two case studies of the durability of the New Zealand Labour Party leaders have produced a mixed verdict for the validity of the study's original three propositions. While the findings have supported their general thrust, the need for altering some of the assumptions has also been made clear. Before wider implications of the study's findings are discussed, first the overall validity of the original propositions is examined.

#### Support and supporters types

The first proposition was regarding the types of support and positions adopted towards leaders in Labour caucuses. To win the leadership, a successful candidate in the PLP has to secure a majority in a caucus vote. Unless the leader is selected unanimously, the selectorate (caucus members) can always be divided into two groups – supporters and opponents. However, supporters are not uniform in terms of the strength of their support for the leader.

P1 There are two degrees of quality of support (*positive* and *non-committal*) for a political leader. The selectorate, however, can be classified into three groups according to their positions towards the leader (loyalists—holders of *positive* support, uncommitted supporters—holders of *non-committal* support, and opponents).

#### ***Positive support and loyalists***

The analysis of the supporters of Moore and Clark has revealed that there was indeed a group of caucus members who were distinguishable from the others for their *positive* support for the leaders. To further confirm the assumptions of the study, *positive* support was akin to personal loyalty to the leaders as individuals. The support was formed based upon the supporters' profound knowledge and understanding of the leaders. To possess such information, supporters needed to have a reasonable level of pre-exposure to the leaders before they assumed the loyalist status. For this reason, when Moore and Clark became the leaders, most of their loyalists were those who had known them for a reasonable length of time either as caucus colleagues or party officials/members<sup>321</sup>.

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<sup>321</sup> The amount of knowledge necessary for forming *positive* support appears to be subjective, depending upon individuals. This is tantamount to asking people: 'How much do you need to know about someone before you trust them?' Although as a general rule, it requires substantial exposure to the leader before one becomes his/her loyalist, exactly how much information one requires varies

There are other features commonly shared among the loyalists. Trust in the leaders at the personal level is one. Also, although not universal, some policy inclinations and worldviews are an underlying feature of some loyalists. The Moore loyalists were characterised by their gender (male) and conservatism on social as well as economic issues. The Clark loyalists, on the other hand, were equipped with liberal views on social matters. Although not exclusive - with David Caygill as a notable exception - the majority of them were also critical of some of the economic reforms implemented by the fourth Labour Government. The Clark loyalists were also heavily drawn from the newer, 1990 and 1993 intakes. Overall, a leaders' match with supporters' ideal leader image (prototype) is universally high amongst the loyalists.

#### Different relationship between the leaders and their loyalists

It is important to note that loyalists do not have a uniform relationship with the leaders. On the contrary, the leaders and followers can have various relationship dynamics. For example, a comparison between Moore and Clark's loyalists reveals an interesting difference.

The term 'loyalist' may imply uncritical allegiance to the leader. Nevertheless, Clark's example showed otherwise. Although loyalty requires profound and unwavering support for the leader - which was evident in both Clark and Moore loyalists - that support can take various forms. Moore's loyalists were generally seen as 'yes men'. On the other hand, some Clark loyalists like Steve Maharey and Judith Tizard boasted about being critical of some of her decisions and actions albeit constructively<sup>322</sup>. It was clear that their criticism was motivated by their desire to see her succeed. Maharey interestingly justified his actions as 'his earned prerogative' after his considerable emotional investment in the struggling leader by promoting and defending her (Chapter 8).

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greatly among MPs. Jill White, for example, admitted to her limited experience with Clark prior to entering Parliament. However, during that short period of time, the new MP quickly established strong trust in Clark, which she maintained throughout her political career until her resignation from Parliament in 1998. (White was elected as Mayor of Palmerston North.) In contrast, some of her other colleagues needed more convincing. For instance, Maharey, despite his three years as Clark's caucus colleague, was not her loyalist in 1993. Perhaps the variance is caused by the nature of the exposure as well as one's personality.

<sup>322</sup> See Chapter 8. Borrowing the terms used by Staub (1997) in his study of patriotism, one may categorise the Moore loyalists as 'blind' loyalists and some of the Clark loyalists as 'constructive' loyalists. According to Staub, with 'blind patriotism' people 'positively value and uncritically support any action of their group'. With 'constructive patriotism', on the other hand, people disapprove and criticise actions of their own group, which are against the group's fundamental values and interests in the long run (Staub, 1997). Application of the blind/constructive dichotomy to personal loyalty to a party leader is by no means inappropriate. Staub himself wrote that his typology could be used for analysis of 'attachments and beliefs' which are linked to entities like 'nations or governments, leaders, or political movements'. (Staub, 1997: 214).

The different types of relationships between the leaders and their followers may reflect the leader's views of the roles of her/his followers. Moore was generally dismissive of views incompatible with his own. When his colleagues and party officials became increasingly sceptical about his leadership, his distrust in them intensified, leaving only a small group of his caucus colleagues and handpicked personal staff members as receivers of his confidence. Tragically for Moore, none of them were regarded by his opponents as having the necessary skills, personalities, or abilities to assist Moore to counter (or complement) his leadership shortcomings. Indeed, it has been suggested that his failure to include people with diverse viewpoints and talents in his inner circle may have contributed to his eventual demise.

Like Moore, few enjoyed Clark's unreserved trust, and she was criticised for placing too much confidence in a few selected individuals such as Heather Simpson. Again like her predecessor, some of Clark's loyalists were or had become her personal friends. However, where she differed from Moore was that she included those outside this small circle among her loyalists. Competent and able MPs such as Caygill, who professed not to be her personal friend, respected and worked closely with the leader. In turn, Clark listened to their suggestions/advice. Although a number of MPs (especially the 1993 Moore supporters) still felt isolated and excluded under Clark's leadership, such feelings were less acute in the caucus in comparison to when Moore was the leader. Whether she actually encouraged her loyalists to be critical of her leadership shortcomings is not clear, but she was at least prepared to tolerate it. It would not be surprising if the Clark loyalists' allegiance to her was strengthened by her readiness to accept (or at least not dismiss) their opinions.

### ***Non-committal support and uncommitted supporters***

The assumption that there are different types of support for the leaders, one of which is *positive* support, has been verified. Also correct was the assumption that the 'non-loyalist' supporters are those whose position is tentative, subject to some variables. They did not share the loyalists' absolute conviction that the incumbent leader was the best person to be at the helm. Nor did they have trust in the leader at the personal level.

Some MPs who later became Clark loyalists - especially the 1993 intake - did not take such a position in 1993 when she was elected. This indicates that more profound knowledge and understanding of the leader, upon which they can form trust in him/her, is indeed a necessary condition for *positive* support. Without such trust, caucus members with sympathetic inclinations to the leader are likely to assume the position of uncommitted supporters.

If insufficient knowledge of the leader is *the* reason for *non-committal* support, then such support status can be transitory. *Non-committal* support can develop into *positive*

support as supporters' knowledge of (and confidence in) the leader grows. Sound knowledge and understanding of the leader alone, however, is not a sufficient condition for *positive* support. If fundamental trust does not derive from them, *non-committal* support, or opposition, may be the end result. The uncommitted supporters for both Moore in 1993 (except for Damien O'Connor) and Clark in 1996 all had had sufficient exposure to their respective leaders. Instead of providing a ground for *positive* support, their knowledge of the leaders led them to the conclusion that their leaders did not match their ideal leadership image (prototype). In these cases, more exposure to the leaders would not have changed their uncommitted supporters' positions at all. In other words, their support status was not temporary.

Not all the findings of the case studies have supported the propositions in relation to the categories of '*non-committal* support' and 'uncommitted supporters'. Clark's case study has revealed that these blanket categorisations are rather inadequate, unable to cover all the support types outside *positive* support sufficiently. It has highlighted the need for sub-dividing uncommitted supporters into two respective groups, namely, waverers (*wavering* support) and pragmatic supporters (*pragmatic* support).

**Table 9-1**  
**Support/Supporter Types**

<u>Position types</u>	<u>Support types</u>	<u>S reliability</u>	<u>S reasons</u>
<b><u>Supporters</u></b>			
<i>Loyalist</i>	<i>Positive support</i>	<i>Very High</i>	<i>Fundamental trust in the leader (Reliability, leadership style, commitment to party policy etc.)</i>
<u>Uncommitted supporters (Non-loyalist)</u>			
<i>Waverers</i>	<i>Wavering support</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Likely winner etc.</i>
<i>Pragmatic supporters</i>	<i>Pragmatic support</i>	<i>High (temporary)</i>	<i>No appropriate alternative The timing of the coup</i>
<b><u>Opponents</u></b>			
<i>Opponents</i>	<i>None (opposition)</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Not finding the leader suitable for the top position</i>

## **Waverers**

Waverers are perhaps closer to the initial image of uncommitted supporters: MPs who change their positions freely between leadership candidates, using variables such as the opinion poll ratings, promotion chances, and the proximity to the next election. They did not have fixed positions on the issue of the leadership, and were prepared to vote for both the incumbent and a challenger.

Interestingly, MPs who took this truly non-committal position were very few in the case studies. There were at least two possible explanations for this. First, there were several dividing issues between the contenders. The supporters of Clark and Moore underlined their respective candidates' differences in terms of leadership styles, public popularity, and perceived ideologies in their effort to legitimise their own positions during the leadership struggle. It was difficult to maintain - even the image of, if not real - neutrality on all those points. Second, due to the small size of the caucus, MPs became subject to immense pressure to declare their positions. The small caucus size also enabled MPs and the party officials to identify the wavering minority and heavy lobbying from all the competing camps followed. Since the leadership issues provoked strong emotional reactions from all those involved, not to succumb to such high pressure was not easy. Of course, there are always some waverers who promise their support to both sides. But they do it at the cost of their reputation in the caucus.

## **Pragmatic supporters**

Pragmatic supporters, unlike waverers, know exactly where they stand in leadership contests. Like loyalists, they support the incumbent and are not wavering. However, unlike loyalists, pragmatic supporters lack fundamental trust in the leader and experience varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the leader's performance. What determines their position is the resentment towards either the alternative leader(s) or a leadership change itself. In 1993, the Clark pragmatic supporters backed her because: 1) they wanted to depose Moore; and 2) Clark was the alternative candidate with the best chance of achieving that goal. The loyalists' conviction that she was the best person to lead the party was missing from their consideration. Likewise, in 1996, a few pragmatic supporters stood by Clark despite their dissatisfaction with her performance. Their reasons for doing so were: 1) they saw Moore's return to the top position as unacceptable; 2) no other candidate who could improve the situation for them was available; and/or 3) a leadership change was ill conceived. From their point of view, maintaining the status quo was the best available option in 1996.

The 1993 uncommitted Moore supporters - waverers or pragmatic supporters?

Now with the distinction having been made clear, one question needs to be addressed: which category did the 1993<sup>323</sup> Moore uncommitted supporters fit?

All signs indicate that the majority of this group can be safely classified as pragmatic supporters. To begin with, they were not uncertain about where they stood at the time of the leadership vote; they were not wavering between Moore - their favoured choice - and Clark. Their reasons for supporting Moore also exhibited the characteristics of pragmatic supporters. They shared some concerns held by the Moore opponents about his leadership, although without the same intensity. While they positively valued Moore's campaigning ability, their position was primarily determined by their negative views of the leadership coup and, to a lesser extent, Clark as the alternative. With regard to the coup, they felt antagonised by its timing (which implied that the coup had been organised during the election campaign), the manner in which it was executed, and/or its left-wing ideological connotation. At the same time, some of the uncommitted Moore supporters found Clark unacceptable for her perceived lack of public appeal – an asset necessary to win an election in their view. Because of these factors, their position was 'entrapped' in favour of Moore. But this situation would have changed if those constraints had been removed. For instance, those who did not object to Clark as the alternative would have voted differently if the challenge had taken place at a later time.

### **Support and leadership durability**

The second and third propositions dealt with the leadership durability, and both derived from the first proposition. The second proposition was:

P2 In order to make the leadership more secure, the leader needs to increase the proportion of the loyalists among the selectorate. However, the achievement of this task is hindered by institutional, practical, and personality reasons.

To analyse the validity of the above proposition, it is helpful to divide it into two smaller segments.

P2a: The reliability of each support type varies with *positive* support being the most reliable. Hence it is in the leader's interest to increase the proportion of loyalists in the caucus.

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<sup>323</sup> It is impossible to re-categorise the 1990 uncommitted Moore supporters in the new caucus after the General Election for an obvious reason: there was no leadership contest or crisis which forced caucus members to choose (or consider choosing) between Moore and alternative leaders. Without such an occasion, one cannot know: a) the strength of their affiliation to the leader (an indicator for waverers); or b) the reason for their affiliation to Moore (an indicator for pragmatic supporters).

P2b: The achievement of the above task is hindered by institutional, practical, and personality reasons.

### **A. Support reliability**

#### Positive support

The reliability of loyalists' support has turned out, as expected, to be high. When both Moore and Clark came under threat, their loyalists unfailingly offered the most dedicated support. The case studies have shown that remarkably, none of the loyalists deserted their leaders in the crises. Why was their support so dependable? A key to its dependability was the loyalists' trust in the leaders, based upon their sound knowledge of the leader. Such intimate and accurate information enabled the loyalists to come up with realistic expectations of the new leaders, which had a high likelihood of realisation.

#### Pragmatic support

Whether the leader can rely on *pragmatic* support is subject to two factors: a) the nature of a proposed leadership change; and b) available alternative leaders. Pragmatic supporters share waverers' low tolerance for the leader's deviation from expectations. For instance, when the extent of the policy shift under Clark's leadership fell short of their expectations, a few caucus left members became disillusioned.

This low tolerance level for failure to meet the original expectations leads pragmatic supporters to the same behaviour as waverers: they consider withdrawing their support from the leader as soon as the leader's failure is recognised. Nevertheless, despite dissatisfaction with the leader, pragmatic supporters do not have waverers' freedom to move freely between the leader and available contender(s). Their option is confined (or 'entrapped') to supporting the incumbent by the two aforementioned factors. For instance, Lange could not shift his support away from Clark in 1996 because no acceptable alternative leaders were available. Similarly, a number of the caucus members felt obliged to support Moore in 1993 because they saw the manner in which the coup was organised as deplorable.

In the short term - or as long as the existing constraints remain - the reliability of *pragmatic* support is high, possibly as high as *positive* support. Its reliability in the long term is, however, questionable. Since they do not possess loyalists' personal commitment to the leader, their support may evaporate as soon as the constraints are removed. For instance, if the lack of appropriate alternative leaders is seen as the problem by this group, the emergence of a candidate whom they consider acceptable would move their allegiance. Likewise, if pragmatic supporters have concerns about the

propriety of the proposed leadership change (eg., regarding its timing and the manner of execution), they might consider supporting another leadership challenge (even with the same alternative leader) when it is organised 'properly' at a later point in time.

### Wavering support

Amongst all the types of support, *wavering* support is least reliable. As seen in Chapter 6, waverers' unreliability was well epitomised by Jonathan Hunt's comment on this group of MPs - who promised their support to both sides – they needed to be ruled out as votes in number crunching.

Unlike loyalists, waverers have some doubts and concerns about a leader's suitability for the top position. The lack of loyalists' fundamental trust in him/her means that they are less forgiving if the leader fails to meet their expectations and eradicate their concerns. Once the leader starts deviating from their original expectations, *wavering* support starts eroding.

### New MPs

New MPs need a special mention in relation to their support reliability. Since sound knowledge of the leader is a prerequisite for *positive* support, new MPs with limited previous exposure to him/her are likely to offer either *wavering* or *pragmatic* support if they choose to support the leader.

In general, their support appears to be more fragile than that of their more experienced colleagues. In 1990, the seven new MPs all initially supported Moore. However, six members out of this group were amongst the Clark supporters three years later. The 1993 new intake exhibited similar flexibility. While no loyalists of this group altered their positions, four MPs who supported Clark with either *pragmatic* or *wavering* support in 1993 seemed to have changed their views of the leader.

New MPs' high instability rate can be explained by two reasons. Firstly, they may not possess sufficient knowledge about the leader as an individual to form an accurate perception about her/him. The opportunity to observe the leader in a small caucus setting may offer them a different - hitherto unavailable - perspective of him/her. With that extra knowledge, they may realise that their initial perceptions of the leader were inaccurate. If their original expectations were built around such false perceptions of the leader, such expectations can be unrealistic with little chance of being fulfilled. Some of the 1993 newcomers supporting Clark who had little knowledge of her were a case in point. Their expectation of her as a convivial and consulting leader turned sour because such behaviour was simply out of her character. (More experienced counterparts did not have such expectations of her.)



Secondly, novices' inexperience in national politics may mean that they are unfamiliar with not only individual colleagues (including the leader) but also the nature of parliamentary politics. Without an understanding of how politics at that level works, they may not know the required qualities for a party leader. Nor can they know the boundary of the leadership (what one leader realistically can or cannot do in that environment). As a result, again, they may risk coming up with unrealistic expectations of the leader.

Newly gained knowledge of parliamentary politics may also alter new MPs' views of their ideal leadership image (prototype). In this case, even if their initial perceptions of the leader were accurate, s/he may no longer be seen as the best person to lead the party, as s/he lacks the qualities which they now consider essential. Again, an example can be found in some of the 1993 Clark supporters. For some of the 1993 intake, the importance of the leader's personal popularity increased over time. This was partly due to their realisation that in order to achieve anything substantive, the party needed to be in power first, and that the party needed a popular leader to obtain the power. As a result, these MPs' support was lost to a more popular alternative, Moore in 1996.

#### **B. The difficulties of consolidating the support base**

In supporting the new leader, supporters naturally form expectations. On the other hand, in objecting to (or not supporting) that person, opponents find concerns in the new leadership. Plus, some of the supporters - especially waverers and pragmatic supporters - may also share such concerns. Support erodes if the leader fails to satisfy expectations. Discontent develops if the leader does not attend to and eradicate, concerns. Therefore, the future of the leadership depends upon the leader's success with these two tasks.

When facing these tasks, the leader aims to change the composition of his/her initial support base on his/her election so that her/his standing can be strengthened. As discussed above, *positive* support is the most reliable, followed by *pragmatic*, *wavering* support and opposition in order of reliability. To make his/her position safer, the leader needs to increase the level of reliability of the existing supporters while converting opponents into (preferably reliable) supporters.

#### Retaining *positive* support

To retain loyalists' support is the least difficult, as evidenced by Moore and Clark's perfect retention records of their respective loyalists. Even when the leader fails to meet the original expectations, loyalists tend to stay with the leader. This was evident in Clark's leadership. When Moore was toppled in December 1993, Clark's supporters contained a number of MPs associated with the caucus left. When explained by Clark

later that a radical policy shift would not be politically feasible, instead of re-considering their support position, her loyalists accepted her stance and remained loyal to her. In other words, they re-adjusted their expectations to suit Clark's decisions.

This extra room given by her loyalists may seem to echo Edwin P. Hollander's concept of 'idiosyncrasy credit' (Chapter 2) which a leader can earn for expectation-meeting behaviour from his/her followers. According to the American scholar, a leader with such credit can deviate from the expectations of the followers, with the extent of the deviation being determined by the volume of credit. Clark's case study has validated Hollander's assertion that a leader with trust (credit) of supporters, enjoys more freedom, without being restricted by stringent performance evaluation.

Hollander was also correct in arguing that loyalists' support can cease when the leader's behaviour exhausts the loyalists' trust by breaching their expectations too often or too much. However, when asked what Clark needs to do to diminish their *positive* support for her, the conditions that her loyalists listed were more limited than Hollander might have expected. They were, by the loyalists' own admission, best described as highly unlikely to materialise - such as her personality changes. It seems that *positive* support can erode only by actions which breach the supporters' *fundamental* trust in the leader. Odd deviations from (minor) expectations may not severely affect loyalists' views of the leader as a whole. All these findings emphasise the high reliability of *positive* support.

#### Converting non-loyalists (waverers, pragmatic supporters and opponents) into loyalists

In contrast, the task of converting non-loyalists into loyalists has turned out to be quite challenging - although not impossible - for the leaders. Moore seemed to have successfully added George Hawkins to his loyalists during his leadership, while his successor managed to gain *positive* support from Steve Maharey, Trevor Mallard, and Larry Sutherland before the May 1996 challenge.

However, both leaders failed to do the same with the overwhelming majority of non-loyalists. The case studies have shown that only one of the initial opponents of one leader later became his/her supporter (Braybrooke for Clark). Moreover, most of the movements between support positions for either leader were 'downwards' in terms of support reliability. Many of Moore's 1990 uncommitted supporters became his opponents by 1993. Similarly, Clark could not keep some of her 1993 supporters in the same support status when she was challenged two and half years later.

#### **C. Support consolidation hindrance factors**

So, why is the task of consolidating leadership support so difficult? It has become clear through the case studies that there are several factors which preclude the leader from achieving this goal.

*a. The leader's limited control over realisation of expectations*

Firstly, the leader does not always have direct control over realisation of expectations. For example, caucus members expect the leader to lead the party to an election victory. While her/his performance in this regard is ultimately judged by an election result, it is regularly scrutinised against opinion poll results. Caucus members use this information rather than their own judgement of his/her performance, as the assessment yardstick.

The problem for the leader is that s/he has little control over the poll ratings. S/he can often reach the public only through the mass media, and the media may not necessarily project a favourable image - intentionally or unintentionally - of the leader. Furthermore, the public's evaluation of the party and the leader's performance is subject to other variables such as the state of the economy, the performance of other parties, and the behaviour of his/her own colleagues. For example, with regard to the latter, Clark claimed that the party and her popularity suffered from constant internal bickering and insurgence. As her situation with Moore proved, the leader can exert little power over her/his own colleagues if they are resolved to undermine the leader. Then again, even if the leader and his/her colleagues present their best behaviour, there is no assurance that such an effort will be favourably recognised in the next opinion poll.

Similarly, Moore's effort to meet one of his expectations - restoring the damaged relationship between the PLP and EPLP - was affected by the limitation of what he could do. To improve any relationship, one side's effort alone is not sufficient; the other side needs to respond positively to its initiative as well. Both Moore and the two Party Presidents who worked with him attest that they did their best to establish a good working relationship. But they could not work harmoniously with each other due to personality and ideological reasons. As a result, the relationship continued to deteriorate to the point at which the damage was simply irreversible.

*b. Conflicting expectations/concerns*

Secondly, the leader can face a dilemma prioritising different expectations and concerns. This is because contradictions and inconsistencies can exist among them. In such a case, meeting one group's expectations (or resolving their concerns) can be possible only at the expense of another group's expectations. Therefore, the leader in this situation has to decide which followers and their interests need to be catered for ahead of others. Inaction or compromises can be an option, but the leader may risk leaving all the groups dissatisfied, which of course can erode the leader's support base.

Moore found himself in this predicament. In the earlier stages of his leadership, in an attempt to appease the concerns over his erratic tendency and dominant behaviour, he consciously tempered his natural flair and tried to be an inclusive leader. However, he later realised that this new leadership approach might prevent him from achieving one of the other expectations - winning the 1993 election. Despite being aware that negative reactions would ensue, he decided to resurrect his old leadership style to fight the election. Moore's dilemma was further complicated by mixed views of his leadership problems within the caucus. Although his leadership style became a concern for the whole caucus, the groups of MPs who found it significant enough to justify a leadership change were a minority in the 1990~1993 caucus. With a majority willing to tolerate his behaviour, Moore may have felt less compelled to tackle this problem.

Conflicts can exist over particular expectations, too. Upon becoming the leader, Clark faced a dilemma in relation to the expected policy shift. The majority of the caucus accepted the view that a leftward policy shift was necessary to re-establish Labour as a credible centre-left party but no radical revisit of the existing policies was required in that process. However, minority groups on both left and right had different ideas. The former, supportive of Clark, expected her to re-write some of the fundamental policies. The latter, on the other hand, vehemently opposed such a view. They argued that the party should tailor its policies for middle class New Zealanders, building itself as a centre party. The only viable option for Clark, which also suited her personal belief, was to pursue the line supported by the majority. Although that decision subsequently alienated the minority groups, satisfying the whole caucus was simply impossible, given the diverse and conflicting expectations.

*c. The lack of necessary skills, beliefs, and personalities*

Thirdly, the leader cannot fulfil the followers' expectations and alleviate the opponents' concerns if s/he is not equipped with the necessary skills, beliefs, and/or personality. Without appropriate skills, even the most willing leader cannot accomplish what s/he sets out to achieve. Without appropriate beliefs, s/he fails to sympathise with the followers' wants and needs. Consequently, his/her efforts will be at best half-hearted. Without the right personality, the leader finds meeting expectations uncomfortable, difficult and frustrating. Or, in an extreme case, s/he may even refuse to fulfil the expectations at all.

These points were well illustrated in Moore's leadership. Following the humiliating election loss in 1990, the party needed to redeem itself by establishing a new identity, disassociating itself from the Rogernomics past. At the same time, Moore was required to oversee the process of reconciliation with the EPLP, as the relationship between the two wings of the Labour Party had become seriously strained during the previous six

years. Among the leadership qualities required for this re-building process were patience, the skills to consult and organise, as well as the abilities to obtain consensus among various views. Moore's renowned strengths such as energy, spontaneity, and flamboyancy - valuable assets during the election campaign - seemed misplaced in this role.

With regard to beliefs, Moore never accepted the view held by some caucus members and party officials that some of the economic reforms conducted by the fourth Labour Government were a mistake. While he recognised some problems in the reforms, especially in the manner in which they were implemented, he supported their main thrust. He never felt comfortable with complying with the expectations to disown Labour's policy record between 1984-1990. As a result, his attempt was regarded by his critics as insincere.

Also, some of Moore's personality traits such as strong personal ambition, mistrust in certain individuals, and strong self-confidence seemed to affect his actions, too. When he saw the winning of the 1993 election (and thus fulfilling his long held ambition of becoming the Prime Minister again) within his reach, he jettisoned his attempts to adapt to the new role. Those who disagreed with him were increasingly treated with suspicion and as distractors, trying to deny his dream. Armed with strong self-confidence, Moore seemed to believe that he would eventually be vindicated, which may have caused him to deviate further from expectation-complying behaviour.

Clark's failure to meet expectations and mitigate concerns was also attributed to her lack of necessary skills, beliefs, and personality. Without an appetite for personal popularity, she was reluctant to engage in activities to increase it. Without the necessary skills (including charisma), her efforts appeared clumsy and awkward, lacking necessary conviction to evoke a favourable public perception. Her strong self-confidence based upon her abilities, was identified as a possible source for her impatience with her colleagues with lesser and/or different abilities, which restricted her inclusiveness.

#### *d. Limited resources*

Fourthly, even with the right skills and attributes, the leader still can fail to meet the supporters' expectations and eradicate concerns because there are not enough resources to attend to them properly. For instance, in an interview with a university student newspaper, Clark said:

As Leader of Opposition you're not well resourced. I mean, [the then Prime Minister] Mr Bolger would have a briefing every morning on everything, that doesn't happen to me. (Menzies, 1997: 18).

Among all the resources, perhaps the most scarce is time. As the primary spokesperson of the party on every significant issue, the demands on the leader are

heavy. Often s/he is left with little time for consolidation of his/her support base. This restraint is particularly disadvantageous if expectations/concerns require the leader's personal time<sup>324</sup>. For instance, if MPs expect to seek the leader's regular consultation and advice, their expectations are unlikely to be fulfilled.

To bypass this time problem, the leader needs to organise well and, above all, to delegate his/her work where possible. Clark commented on this point when she discussed parliamentarians in general.

Politicians have to be very disciplined and well organised. We have to be able to prioritise and to delegate and have a very clear sense of the priorities because it is impossible to do everything which is personally demanded of us. (Light, 1998: 21).

Delegation is essential for at least two reasons. First and foremost, it lightens the leader's workload. Second, if administered carefully, it can substantially strengthen the leadership. Every leader has strengths and weaknesses. If the leader chooses people with diverse skills and viewpoints and assigns suitable work to them, it can enhance his/her strengths while complementing her/his weaknesses. Delegation is the leader's sign of trust in delegates' competence. One of its possible and positive outcomes is that once shown such trust, MPs may wish to reciprocate the leader's confidence by strengthening their support for him/her. Clark's three converted loyalists (Maharey, Mallard, and Sutherland) all shared close working relationships with her during the 1993~1996 period.

In reality, however, delegation is a tricky business for the leader. Both Clark and Moore were accused of relying heavily on a small circle of trusted allies including handpicked personal staff. As a result: a) the feeling of isolation and resentment felt by the excluded opponents developed and worsened; and b) they could not provide solutions to their problems since both leaders chose like-minded and similarly skilled individuals. The leader's actions may be further restricted by his/her personality (such as her/his level of trust in others and of self-esteem) as much as the limited human resources (ie., talents) available in the given caucus. On the limited human resources, in 1995 Clark confessed her frustration with the caucus management to an interviewer:

... I don't hire and fire MPs. I have to accept what is served up to me as a result of party selection processes and electorate voting, and I've got to then try to make it work (Roger, 1995: 55).

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<sup>324</sup> While in Government, Geoffrey Palmer wrote in 1987: 'Both the leader and deputy leader (with the Whips) become involved in what we used to call at university the 'care and feeding of the faculty'. Ministers or Caucus members who have political problems, personal problems, health problems or some other sort of problem must be seen and talked to. Some of these problems can be quite time consuming and difficult' (Palmer, 1987: 69).

*e. Followers' susceptibility to changes*

Even if the leader somehow manages to meet all the expectations, there will always be some caucus members who remain non-loyalists. The last factor which may limit the leader's task is followers' susceptibility to changing their support positions. For successful support consolidation, the leader's effort is only half of the equation. To complete the conversion, caucus members are required to positively respond to the leader's effort. Without it, even the leader's best effort has no effect.

This point can be illustrated with Clark's situation. Her opponents openly admired the strengths and skills which she brought to the leadership. The only area where she was considered failing was in relation to the party and her own popularity. But even if she had been successful there, would her opponents have become her loyalists? Such a prospect is highly unlikely. It appears almost certain that if the poll ratings of herself and the party had been far more favourable, many of the opponents would have supported Clark - but only as pragmatic supporters or waverers. Why?

Many Clark opponents were experienced parliamentarians. Through their times in parliament they had acquired the view that the leader's primary role was to win an election and to protect fellow MPs' seats. At the same time, longer experience had exposed those MPs to a wider range of leaders with different shortcomings. Such exposure enabled MPs to develop a greater tolerance for leaders with imperfections, especially for those with effective campaign abilities. They would support almost *any* leader as long as s/he could deliver an electoral victory. Therefore, with different poll results, Clark could have counted upon their support. However, their heavy dependence upon poll results would have also made their allegiance extremely unreliable if Labour's popularity started to decline.

While not explored in depth in this study, like the leader, the followers' feelings and personalities can play a significant role in determining their susceptibility to support changes. For example, when leaders come under a threat, their supporters (especially loyalists) tend to take it personally and resent the move intensely. Leadership contests are almost invariably deeply divisive events. Emotional wounds and scars caused by intensive leadership battles take time to heal. If MPs feel strongly for the previous leader, it is unrealistic to expect them to change their positions immediately to support the new leader.

Also, the followers' personal leadership ambitions may be of particular importance. Logically, strong leadership aspirations are at variance with *positive* support for another person. Only one person can be the best leader in the party. If one believes that s/he is that chosen one, how can s/he loyally support someone less worthy? It was no coincidence that two former leaders, Lange (who professed his leadership ambition in

April 1992, see Chapter 3) and Moore (who never relinquished his leadership ambition), refrained from providing *positive* support to another leader.

**Leadership durability**

**Leadership durability and original support compositions**

The final proposition of the study was:

P3 The leader’s durability can be explained (and largely predicted) by the *quality* of support - based upon the composition of the support - which the leader receives on his/her selection - as distinct from her/his *numerical* support.

To win the leadership, needless to say, the leader needs majority support. On the surface, it appears that the greater the majority the safer the position. A small winning margin makes the leader look weak. However, the vulnerability of leadership cannot be accurately judged by the size of the winning majority. What this study has revealed is that it is the *quality* of the majority that counts. Consider the following two hypothetical situations.

	<b><u>Supporters total</u></b>	<b><u>Opponents</u></b>	<b><u>Majority</u></b>
Leader A:	40	10	30
Leader B:	30	20	10

Both Leader A and B lead a caucus of 50 members. Which leadership is more durable? If judgement is based upon the size of winning majority, then the answer must be A, whose majority of 30 comfortably exceeds B’s mere 10. A closer examination of their support compositions, however, may reveal quite a different picture.

	<b><u>Loyalists</u></b>	<b><u>Pragmatic</u></b>	<b><u>Waverers</u></b>	<b><u>Opponents</u></b>
Leader A:	5	15	20	10
Leader B:	26	4	0	20

Leader A’s impressive majority consists mainly of pragmatic supporters and waverers. Combined with opponents, waverers, whose support is the least reliable among all the supporters, constitute the caucus majority. The majority of B’s supporters, on the other hand, are loyalists. With 26 members in this group, loyalists alone enjoy the outright majority in the caucus.

The relationship between a support composition and leadership is akin to the relationship between a foundation and a building. If the foundation is solid, the building has a better chance of withstanding a potential earthquake. In contrast, a building on a weaker foundation may collapse in a tremor of the same magnitude. Similarly, leadership with a strong support composition has a better chance of survival under



stress. In contrast, the future of a leader elected on a weak support composition is less certain.

Based upon the findings of the study, as a rule:

- Leadership durability is determined by the strength of the support composition.
- The strength of the support composition, in turn, increases in accordance with the proportion of loyalists in it.
- Conversely, leadership vulnerability increases with the presence of waverers in the original support composition.
- The proportion of pragmatic supporters amongst the non-loyalist supporters affects the short-term leadership durability. As long as the restraints on the movement of *pragmatic* support are in place, it can be regarded as guaranteed support. Accordingly, the higher its proportion, the more secure the leadership.

Nevertheless, some caution is required before Proposition 3 is declared valid. In reality, the above rules have limited validity. The following example case illustrates the point.

	<u>Loyalists</u>	<u>Pragmatic</u>	<u>Waverers</u>	<u>Opponents</u>
Leader C:	10	12	11	17
Leader D:	16	4	8	22

How secure are Leaders C and D's positions? Between them, which leadership is more durable? Leader D has more loyalists than Leader C does, but D has more opponents as well. Does that make C's leadership safer or weaker than D's? Or, because the combined numbers of waverers and opponents for both Leaders C and D are greater than the sums of loyalists and pragmatic supporters, do the two leaders have a similar degree of vulnerability?

If the leader has loyalists who are the majority of the caucus, then there is no question that her/his leadership is durable. But, in reality, such a situation is rare. Even Clark, whose support composition contained a high proportion of loyalists, did not have that luxury. The experiences of Bill Rowling in December 1980 (Bassett, 1998: 351), Lange in June 1989 (Sheppard, 1999: 189-190), plus Moore and Clark all suggest the fate of the leadership is most likely to be determined by waverers or pragmatic supporters.

Given this reality, one may ask: 'Do leaders' original support compositions matter?' If the leader's future always lies in the hands of waverers or pragmatic supporters, what difference does it make if the proportion of her/his loyalists is, say, 10%, 20%, or 45% of the whole caucus?

### The importance of a large proportion of loyalists for leadership durability

Even when loyalists do not constitute the outright majority of the caucus, and thus cannot shield the leader from a potential coup, a larger proportion of trusted allies increases leadership durability in several ways.

Firstly, a higher proportion of loyalists grants the leader more time to consolidate his/her leadership standing in the caucus. Given the high reliability of *positive* support, the leader is not required to spend much time on retention of this group's allegiance. Therefore, if s/he has a sound support base in the caucus, the leader can dedicate more time towards dealing with less reliable supporters and opponents' expectations/concerns.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, more loyalists can mean stronger political leverage for the leader. As earlier discussed, loyalists have high tolerance if the leader deviates from their original expectations. Moreover, they allow the leader to modify their expectations to suit the political reality in which s/he needs to operate. So, if the leader has a larger proportion of loyalists in her/his support, s/he is able to deal with non-loyalist supporters' expectations and opponents' concerns without eroding the original support base.

Thirdly, the more loyalists the leader has in the caucus, the fewer non-loyalist supporters s/he needs for survival. If the number of the latter group is smaller, it is easier to meet their demands. In addition, the leader also has a better chance of controlling or manipulating the situation to strengthen his/her standing. For example, as Clark's case study indicated, the small number of waverers enabled the leader and her proponents to concentrate their lobbying effort on them. Also, the leader may be able to ensure that the restraints that entrap pragmatic supporters will remain. Clark (perhaps not intentionally) practically locked in a few left MPs by having included all the potential alternatives, whom this group may have preferred to her, among her loyalists. Moore also successfully painted Clark's challenge in 1993 as an act of treachery and thus kept one of the restraints for his pragmatic supporters (ie., the hostility towards the coup's timing and manner of execution). However, because of the large number of his pragmatic supporters, even if he had managed to fend off Clark's challenge in 1993, how long Moore could have kept that restraint on his supporters is a matter of question.

Fourthly, a larger group of loyalists provides a more effective support system to the leader under pressure. They can provide her/him with various forms of assistance both inside and outside the caucus against distractors. As seen in Chapter 6, Clark recognised the importance of such help for her own political survival (H. Clark, 1996).

A strong presence of loyalists can also serve as a deterrent for potential insurgents and their sympathisers. Loyalists have strong emotional attachment to the leader. As the case studies have shown, when the leader is threatened, they defend him/her

vigorously, even resorting to some unusual (or extreme) measures (such as the leaking to the media in 1996). If their leader is challenged, this group can ensure that the battle will be bloody and traumatising. The larger the component of loyalists, the bigger the damage. Such a prospect can be daunting for those who may consider challenging the leader. Therefore, the greater the proportion of loyalists, the higher the 'threshold' which dissenters have to clear.

In sum, the leader with a large proportion of loyalists has a better chance of 'leading' the party. The larger the group of loyalists, the fewer internal worries the leader needs to attend to. This may give the leader extra confidence to use his/her authority more effectively and convincingly in public. Such performance is more likely to improve the party's public standing, which in turn may lead to non-loyalists' higher approval of the leader. David Caygill describes this positive flow-on effect in the following terms:

I think there's a sort of self-reinforcing thing that goes on here you know, that a leader will look good if [s/he] looks confident, [s/he] will be confident if [s/he's] been successful, [s/he] will be successful in part if [s/he's] confident. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

On the other hand, if the leader has to be involved in a lot of intra-caucus squabbling, the opinion polls will reflect such a state of the party poorly. That may bring dire consequences to the leader. As Maharey notes:

When things go wrong, you've got to drop back down to the machine again and start tinkering a bit, go to see people, and talk with them, and you don't have to do that when things are good. You can lift yourself back out of that, know it's all going on well, and have a few differences of [opinion with] people, you know, it's all just so much better. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

So, it seems evident that even when the leader does *not* have the outright caucus majority with loyalists, the original support composition (especially the proportion of loyalists) still matters for his/her future.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the original support composition alone cannot explain – or predict – how vulnerable the leader is. Proposition 3 was inaccurate in this respect. If the number of loyalists fall short of the outright majority, the leader's future is dependent upon her/his success at the task of meeting the supporters' expectations and eradicating the opponents' concerns. (How much success s/he needs for survival is determined by the original support composition.)

### **The leader's ability to meet expectations/eradicate concerns**

Based upon the earlier discussion of the factors precluding the leader from achieving the task, the likelihood of the leader's success can be estimated through examination of the following two points.

#### *a. The nature of expectations/concerns*

- Is the realisation of the expectations within the leader's direct control?
- Do they contain contradictions?

*b. The leader-task compatibility*

- Is the leader equipped with the right skills, beliefs, and personality for the task?
- If not, does s/he have the resources to complement his/her shortcomings?

Leadership durability change

The original support composition and the leader's ability to achieve the task of satisfying expectations and alleviating concerns are the two major determining factors of the leadership durability. Naturally, any alterations to either of these factors affect the security of the leader's position. Moore's leadership fell victim to such changes.

*a. The composition changes of the caucus*

The first type of alterations is most likely to occur after an election. Since the PLP first contested for parliamentary representation in 1919 as a united party, every general election has changed its composition through the addition and attrition of MPs. In Moore's case, the caucus which elected him as the leader lasted only for eight weeks. The caucus composition had a completely different look after the devastating defeat in 1990. On balance, the election probably helped Moore as it claimed more casualties from his opponents than his supporters. However, it had a far-reaching impact on his leadership through the addition of new MPs. This entire group, except for Hawkins, not only enthusiastically embraced the new expectations of the leader but also (partly as a result of Moore's failure to meet them) formed the nucleus of the anti-Moore force in 1993. As time passed, they also started questioning Moore's legitimacy as the leader. As newcomers after the 1990 election, they had played no part in his hasty selection. This detachment allowed them to join the remaining former Palmer supporters in asking why Moore had become the leader.

A significant change to the caucus composition also resulted from the 1993 election. Unlike the 1990 situation, however, this time the caucus experienced an expansion. Twenty Labour MPs (re)entered Parliament whereas four left, in total increasing the caucus size by 16. This expansion of the caucus had a fatal impact on Moore's leadership. Although the dissatisfaction steadily increased in the 1990-1993 caucus, Moore managed to retain majority support in this group until the election. However, with 14 of the 20 additional MPs in favour of a leadership change, the caucus balance was decidedly tipped in Clark's favour. A particularly crucial role was played by the 1993 new intake. Carefully selected by the party hierarchy, which was critical of Moore's leadership, the overwhelming majority (11 of 12) had natural empathy towards

his challenger whom they perceived to be better equipped to meet their expectations. With their presence in the caucus, the Moore supporters were in minority.

*b. Changes of expectations*

Expectations of the leadership may be subject to changes around an election time, too. Every new MP brings to the caucus his/her own perspective and expectations of the leader, some of which are unique to their particular generation (reflecting the mood of the party and electorate at the time) or to individuals. Similarly, with every departing MP, his/her own views on the leadership is subtracted from the subsequent caucus. As a result, the aggregation of the leadership expectations in the caucus changes after every election, which can either strengthen or weaken the incumbent's position.

At the same time, MPs may adopt new expectations of the leader due to the changes of the political environment in which the party operates. For example, the caucus may wish to re-examine the party's strategy and the required leadership qualities to respond to an upcoming election if the party's electoral prospect is not bright. In particular, the sense of urgency to do so is strong among MPs whose seats are considered under threat. If they judge the incumbent as incapable of rescuing their seats, then their next move may be a call for a leadership change. In 1990, Moore benefited from such a change when Palmer continued to fail to lift the party's popularity.

At the same time, Moore's experience suggested that if too much emphasis is placed upon a leadership candidate's immediate election winning ability upon her/his selection, some re-adjustment to the expectations at a later time may be unavoidable. After the 1990 election, entirely different expectations were imposed upon Moore by the new caucus. He was now required to lead the party's re-building phase until the 1993 election. The immediate re-claiming of the party's identity and re-establishing of a trusting relationship with the EPLP suddenly became the focal tasks of the leader. Unfortunately for Moore, this shift of the expectations exposed his unsuitability for these tasks (in terms of personality, ideology, and skills) and exacerbated the concerns about his leadership suitability, held by his opponents and a number of uncommitted supporters.

Of course, the political environment and leadership requirements can change irrespective of an election. Events such as the installation of new leaders in other political parties and a change to the political system can equally affect the environment. In 1993, the introduction of the new electoral system helped shift the leadership expectations further away from Moore. The Clark proponents argued that under MMP the leader would need skills such as precise articulation of policies, adding that Clark had them and Moore did not. Such argument highlighted Moore's perceived problems and assisted Clark's cause.

In contrast, the manner in which Clark assumed her leadership featured fewer uncertain variables:

- She was selected shortly after the 1993 election, presumably for a whole three-year term;
- The expectations of her were long-term and unlikely to undergo sudden changes;
- Clark was chosen by her supporters because of her high compatibility with those long-term expectations;
- She was elected with the majority support of the caucus against a serious rival (Moore).

**Table 9-2**

**Moore-Clark leadership durability affecting factors upon their selections**

	<u>Clark</u>	<u>Moore (September 1990)</u>
<u>Caucus composition</u>	Stable (possibly 3years)	Unstable (likely to change dramatically after the 1990 election)
<u>Supported by:</u>	The majority against a serious candidate	The questionable majority against a weak candidate (Northey)
<u>Expectations:</u>	Long-term Unlikely to change	Extremely short-term (seven weeks). To be newly formed after the election
<u>Leader-task match:</u>	High	High (for the first, pre-election expectations)  Low (for the second, 1990-1993 expectations)

The above comparison suggests that the leader may be able to control his/her leadership durability to a certain extent by choosing how (ie, the timing and manner of mounting a leadership challenge against the incumbent) s/he becomes the leader. The impact of changes to the expectations and/or support composition can be either advantageous<sup>325</sup> or disadvantageous to the incumbent. However, every change involves a risk, and it may make a crucial difference to his/her survival. To gain the top position is only the beginning. In order to exercise the substantive leadership, one needs to hold the position for a reasonable length of time. While the political demands for a

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<sup>325</sup> For example, the 1996 election seemed to have strengthened Clark's position. When Phil Goff organised a private gathering in early 1999, it was described by the media as a vehicle for his future leadership bid to succeed Clark. The list of 13 attendees plus two other MPs who were likely to support his attempt included only two of the seven 1996 intake. See, Laugesen (1999a:A1-2).

leadership change and the ideal conditions for succession may hardly coincide, it may be worthwhile for aspiring leaders to assess the best manner to gain the leadership.

### **Other variables that affect leadership durability**

When the leader does not have the majority of loyalists in the caucus, his/her position is often determined by non-loyalists. Apart from the leader's performance in meeting expectations and handling concerns, there are other variables that affect non-loyalists' positions (and ultimately leadership durability). The study has identified four such variables:

#### A. The party organisation

The first variable is the Extra-Parliamentary party organisation. Although in New Zealand it has no direct say in leadership selection by the parliamentary wing, it can exert some influence over the outcome. Modern convention suggests that the role of the EPLP is to provide support to the incumbent whenever s/he comes under pressure from colleagues. Rowling, Lange, and Palmer all received unfailing, public endorsement from the Party Presidents in times of trouble<sup>326</sup>.

This relationship was broken in 1993 when Moore was challenged by Clark. For the first time in recent party history, the Party President did not endorse the incumbent publicly. Furthermore, behind the scene, Maryan Street, together with some influential party officials, was an ardent supporter of the challenger. She even attempted to persuade Moore to relinquish the leadership voluntarily in the party's best interest. Without the party hierarchy's confidence, Moore's battle to retain the top position became more arduous.

The EPLP's more profound influence over Moore's fate was probably exercised before the actual launch of the challenge. Determined to avoid the mistake of the 1984-1990 period, during which the Labour Government neglected many wishes of the EPLP, party officials carefully selected 'trustworthy' candidates. Consequently, many of the new candidates shared similar views on policies and politics, which were in tune with the views held by the party officials, and more crucially, Clark. In this sense, there was little surprise that in December 1993 the newcomers almost unanimously voted for the new leader. Although as we have seen, the party officials claimed that the candidate selection never aimed at assisting Clark's future leadership bid (or dislodging Moore), it nevertheless helped her when the occasion arose.

The EPLP's involvement in the PLP leadership business can take a more direct form. Once the 1993 election was over and the intention of the coup was known, Street, who

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<sup>326</sup> However, this was not always the norm. According to Sinclair, after the 1960 election, the then President, A.M. Finlay gave notice of motion to the national executive that the PLP should be asked to consider Walter Nash's leadership. (Sinclair, 1976: 355).

had been deliberately kept uninformed of the move, became heavily involved in the challenge. She helped organise meetings, and actively worked with the Clark supporters. In 1996, Michael Hirschfeld lobbied hard, contacting MPs and their local organisations on behalf of the incumbent.

However, while the EPLP plays a role in the PLP's leadership selection (or retention), its influence should not be overestimated. As it is MPs' exclusive prerogative to choose their leaders, if they so wish, they can ignore the party hierarchy's preference. The limit of the EPLP's power was evident in the fact that despite its explicit support for the incumbents and warning against leadership changes, critics of Lange and Palmer continued to apply pressure on them, to which both eventually succumbed.

The effectiveness of the EPLP's influence varies among individual MPs. Whether they can afford to ignore its views is dependent upon factors such as: a) the level of dependence upon the party machinery (both national and local) for their re-election; b) the opinions of the local party organisation, and; c) the popularity of the leadership contenders in their own electorates. For example, it is difficult for an MP in a marginal seat which overwhelmingly favours the existing leader to go against their preferences.

#### B. The caucus rules

The second variable which affects the fate of the leadership is the leadership selection (retention) procedure used. This finding is consistent with previous literature on the leadership that emphasised the impacts of the rules and procedure on the outcome<sup>327</sup>. While the NZLP caucus rule has a provision for a regular leadership review at the first caucus meeting held in the year before a general election, it does not prohibit a challenge outside that scheduled time. Those who are dissatisfied with the existing leadership can test his/her durability anytime, providing they follow the required two-step procedure. Firstly, the caucus needs to approve, by majority, a motion to have a leadership vote. If approved, at the following caucus meeting, a vote will be taken on who should be their leader. This low threshold for a potential coup has been suggested to make the NZLP leader vulnerable by international standards (see Chapter 2).

However, the case studies have demonstrated that the two-step procedure provides more protection to the incumbent than was initially estimated. It has been suggested that in 1993 despite Clark's eventual seven vote majority, Moore could have won the first vote to disallow the motion to carry (thus preventing the challenge from proceeding any further) if he had not unexpectedly seconded the first motion himself. Similarly, the 1996 Moore supporters were quietly confident of their chance of displacing Clark, based upon the feedback from the fellow caucus members. However, they had to call

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<sup>327</sup> See, for example, Alderman (1994 and 1999), Carty et.al. (1990), and Weller (1994).



off the challenge at the last minute when they realised that there was not enough political will in their camp to clear the first hurdle.

These findings suggest that the two-step procedure inherently works to the incumbent leader's advantage. MPs hesitate to support the first motion, which is practically a no-confidence vote in the leader. Even those who are prepared to vote for an alternative in the second vote (thus lack confidence in the incumbent) share this hesitancy. The reason for this is unclear. It may be due to their sense of loyalty to the leader. Or, those MPs may have more tangible reasons. As already indicated, the EPLP normally stands by the existing leader. In addition, the New Zealand public tends to support the underdog – in this case, the leader under internal pressure – regardless of their previous opinions. If an MP is identified by the media as one of the culprits of the leader's demise through endorsing the first motion, s/he can be subject to subsequent public castigation and outcries. What the MP has to endure may intensify even further if the leader is a popular figure and if s/he manages to project the image of him/herself as a hapless victim of unforgivable treachery (as Moore did). Such bad publicity may harm the MP's chance for re-election if the next election is looming.

The leader's advantage vanishes with the first ballot. The self-imposed restraint from supporting the challeng(er) does not seem to apply to the second vote. Once the first vote is carried, MPs feel free to express their preference. At this stage, any remaining sense of loyalty is outweighed by cold calculation of the merits and demerits of each contender. Besides, the second vote means that more than the majority of their colleagues have expressed their lack of confidence in the incumbent. It seems obvious that her/his days are numbered. In these circumstances, waverers may find it tempting to switch their allegiance to a likely victor.

This curious phenomenon is by no means unique to the NZLP. In his detailed account of the British Conservative Party's leadership change in 1990, Robert Shepherd noted how votes for Margaret Thatcher collapsed after the first ballot.

... once members of the payroll vote had discharged their duty to the Prime Minister in the first ballot and the issue became the future of the party, many felt no longer bound by the loyalty requirement. (Shepherd, 1991: 29)

### C. The timing of a challenge

The third variable is the timing of a potential coup. The case studies have demonstrated its influences over the outcome of a leadership challenge. In 1993, some of the Moore supporters decided to vote for the existing leader, despite their doubts over his leadership, due to the timing and manner of execution of the coup.

However, it is important to note that the timing of a coup seems to be a dependant variable - significant only in a combination with other factors. In the case of 1993, the position of the Moore supporters was no doubt related to their perception that under his

leadership, Labour nearly won the election (and probably would do well again in 1996). If the party had not performed as well as it did, many MPs' positions would have been quite different; there would have been little political advantage in retaining an obviously unsuccessful leader after a decisive election loss, especially when there was an acceptable alternative available in Clark.

With regard to the 1996 situation, after surviving the May/June crisis, Clark's position was considered safe until the 1996 election. This was because another leadership challenge - the second within six months - prior to the election would have sent the public the wrong signal about the state of the party. Besides, Clark and her supporters showed a strong resolve against any move to oust her. It was obvious that she would not vacate the position quietly under any circumstances before the election. A messy leadership battle was what anti-Clark sympathisers did not consider worthwhile.

A regular leadership review of the PLP was moved from the last caucus to (practically) the first caucus of the mid year in the 1980s. One of the main purposes of this change was to provide sufficient time (approximately 20 months) for the new leadership team to prepare itself for an election. The implied view was that a leadership change any closer to the next election than 20 months would be detrimental to the party's electoral fortune. Nevertheless, recent cases suggest that this consideration figures less prominently. In August 1989 (against Lange), September 1990 (Palmer), or in 1996 (Clark), there was no shortage of MPs and alternative candidates who were willing to change the leadership with less than 20 months remaining before the next elections. This evidence seems to confirm that if there is sufficient political will in the caucus to change the leader, s/he can be replaced irrespective of the timing.

Perhaps, the timing (or more precisely, the proximity to an election) may be a more important factor in deciding how (rather than if) a leadership change should be pursued. Since an image of party disunity only has a detrimental effect on the party's election result, a leadership change through a messy coup is likely to be counterproductive. Therefore, any attempt to replace the leader in close proximity to an election is more likely to prefer persuasion (and/or a threat), which leaves the outcome of such a challenge ultimately in the leader's hands.

#### D. Alternative leaders

The fourth and the most important variable is the availability of a suitable alternative leader. Without an alternative leader, who is acceptable to the majority of the caucus, discontent with the existing leader remains just as that. Like Rowling (Jackson, 1992b: 12-13), Moore benefited from the lack of suitable challengers in the caucus during the 1990-1993 period. Although frustration with his leadership continued to build up towards the end of the period, any threat remained idle – until Clark emerged as a

serious contender. Other names mentioned, such as Lange, failed to gain any momentum as they lacked sufficient appeal.

Likewise, Clark was greatly assisted by the confusion over the identity of her challenger in 1996. While Moore was regarded by many (including himself) as 'the' alternative, it was never formally confirmed among the five frontbenchers. Nor was his name mentioned at any stage of the ensuing lobbying. In fact, some of the leadership change proponents saw Moore as unsuitable for regaining the leadership, after having witnessed his disruptive behaviour over the past two and half years. Also, there was constant speculation that Michael Cullen was the serious contender, hiding under Moore's cloak. As a consequence, the challenge against Clark suffered a credibility problem. Without a unanimous alternative leader, a leadership change has little chance of success.

The case studies have also recognised some common patterns in the emergence of alternative leaders. They are:

- An attempt to replace the incumbent leader originates from frustration with his/her performance. In this process, the problems of the present leadership are identified by concerned MPs. In search of an alternative leader, the primary selection criteria are the abilities to resolve those problems. In 1990, Moore was chosen as the alternative for his perceived election winning ability, which his predecessor, Palmer, was lacking. He was seen as an antidote to the problem of that time – the declining party popularity.

When Moore was challenged, the pro-change group's main concerns were over his leadership style and skills. Clark emerged as his replacement because of her recognised strengths in those areas where Moore was seen as having problems. Conversely, the 1996 leadership crisis resurrected Moore's star because his perceived strengths were again regarded as the answer to Labour's problem under Clark's leadership.

This pattern was also present in previous leadership changes in the NZLP. For example, Lange was seen as an attractive alternative leader primarily for his popularity and his oratory skills which would match the abrasive Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon. Bill Rowling had lost three consecutive elections and was perceived by his opponents to be failing to make headway against the fierce Muldoon. Likewise, although it was not a coup, when Palmer became the leader to succeed Lange in 1989, he was preferred ahead of Moore for the same logic. The caucus believed that the former deputy leader could 'pull the party together' (Jackson, 1992b: 17) after it had become bitterly divided under Lange's leadership.

- Because leadership changes are a means to rectify the existing problems of a party, the selection criteria for an alternative leader are formed around the shortcomings of the

incumbent leader - the abilities and skills that s/he does not have - rather than her/his strengths. The incumbent leader's strengths are often overlooked in favour of the more desirable assets in an alternative in the selection. For instance, the strengths which both supporters and opponents recognised in Palmer, such as consistency, were not required from Moore in 1990. Similarly, when Clark was emerging as the alternative, her supporters were willing to ignore the fact that she lacked Moore's obvious strengths such as political instinct and the ability to 'connect' with voters. Likewise, Clark's much appreciated skills and abilities for which she was elected as the leader did not come into her opponents' consideration in 1996.

- As a result, the alternative leader is likely to be somebody who is distinct from the incumbent in terms of outlook, personality, skills, etc. S/he must have skills, abilities, and/or personality which the incumbent does not possess in order to rescue the party. At the same time, s/he may not be equipped with the strengths for which the incumbent leader is renowned.

This finding should not come as a surprise. After all, what is the point in replacing the leader with someone who is more or less the same?<sup>328</sup> An interesting point is that the selection criteria - both those the new leader is required to meet and what s/he is not required to meet - are determined by the incumbent leader's perceived weaknesses. This means that, unwittingly, the existing leader may help to select who should be his/her successor even when s/he is ousted in a coup.

The exact criteria for a specific leadership selection are formed based upon the circumstances and the incumbent leader (particularly his/her weaknesses). However, through the case studies it has become clear that there are certain qualities which Labour caucuses seems to constantly seek from its potential leaders regardless of the specifics of the circumstances. Moreover, the caucus expectations/concerns of the leadership are formed around those qualities.

### **The leadership selection (retention) criteria**

As noted in Chapter 2, Jackson (1992b: 28) identified three major leadership selection (retention) criteria in New Zealand. They are:

- 1) Elective: political success in the form of likely victory or improved performance of the party at general elections (as monitored by the opinion polls)

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<sup>328</sup> Choosing an alternative leader who is/looks dissimilar to the existing leader may be a universal practice across the party lines. A former National Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, failed to become the party leader in 1985 to replace Robert Muldoon. The position went instead to Jim McLay. In a TV interview, Bolger explained that that was because [he was 'considered too much like Rob Muldoon' whilst] McLay was 'distinctively different' from the former leader. (TV1, *Assignment*, 7 May 1998, 7:30pm)

- 2) Policy: s/he should be capable of ensuring a degree of ideological satisfaction for party members.<sup>329</sup>
- 3) Unity: related to this is the ability to ensure party unity.

Jackson's list is in line with the British counterpart compiled by Leonard P. Stark, which contained: a) 'unity (retention of internal party solidarity as a cohesive organisation)'; b) 'victory (winning of elections to form a government)'; and c) 'policy (implementation of programmes)' (Stark, 1996: 125). The only noticeable difference between the two lists is their order of priority amongst the criteria. While the New Zealand scholar implied the supreme imperativeness of the victory criterion above the others, Stark stated that in Britain 'unity' was the highest in order, followed by 'victory' and 'policy'.

### The importance of winning

The case studies have confirmed that those three criteria indeed feature in the NZLP's leadership contests. They also verified the predominance of the victory concern over the other two criteria, in support of Jackson's position. 'The Labour Party was primarily formed to become the government' (Wilson, 1989: 29), and this primary goal still seems intact today.

This was most evident in 1990 when the Moore supporters were so willing to overlook his shortcomings and focused on his campaigning ability. In comparison, three years later, the question of the leader's ability to win an election was somewhat less prominent in the leadership struggle. This was probably because of Labour's near victory under the guidance of Moore, who again demonstrated his skills in this field. However, the issue was never away from the Clark supporters' minds. Their analysis was that the party suffered, not benefited, from Moore's leadership style. Blurring the key issues and making arbitrary and inconsistent decisions – all regarded as typical symptoms of his leadership – were seen by this group as the main contributor to Labour's election loss. According to their views, Clark would eradicate those problems, and thus could place Labour in a better position for the 1996 election.

Jackson was also correct in his assertion that Labour caucus members' judgement on their leader is prospective rather than retrospective.

... the real determinant [for the leader's fate] is not so much the loss of one particular election as the perception of the chance of winning the next under the same leader. (Jackson, 1992b: 16-17)

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<sup>329</sup> This second criterion of Jackson's appears to be similar to Stark's competence criterion. Elsewhere Jackson asserted that a successful leader requires an ability to 'outwit skilful rivals in political tactics', 'mould a team' and 'carry the myriad of detailed burdens associated with running executive government' (Jackson, 1992b: 17). For the National Party leaders' required qualities, see Upton (1997).

In 1993, some of Moore's supporters valued his effort in bringing back Labour to the brink of victory – a huge turnaround from the disastrous defeat three years before. However, they were not supporting him out of gratitude for his past accomplishment. They saw the 1993 result as an encouraging indicator of the party's likely position at the 1996 election. Their view was that the party's future would be brighter under the more popular leader than unproven, charisma-less Clark. Similarly, in 1996 Clark supporters were behind her not because of their sentimental attachment to the embattled leader. They were firm in the belief that the party would fare best at the coming election with Clark at the helm. In both cases, MPs' concern was future-bound, not past-oriented.

Labour caucus members' prospective outlook inevitably increase the significance of the opinion polls (Jackson, 1992b: 17) as a (or 'the' for some MPs) indicator of the leader's performance between elections. This point is openly acknowledged by Labour MPs. For instance, Moore states that to 'win' and 'be successful' are the best ways to assure the longevity of the leadership (Moore, interview, 1998). The 1996 Clark supporters share his view. When asked what the leader can do to strengthen his/her position, David Caygill replies: 'I think in the end, the simplest thing is to win. The simplest thing that can consolidate leadership is to be successful' (Caygill, interview, 1998). The former deputy leader explains that people who join the Labour Party are those who 'care about social issues and the direction of the country'. They also do so because they think that more can be achieved for those causes through a collective organisation via government than as an individual. However, losing (a series of) elections can put such a rationale in question.

... if for long periods of time, you lose elections... then you have to ask yourself, you know, whether this makes sense, whether you are achieving what you wanted to achieve. Perhaps it's the policies that are out of tune with the public. Perhaps it is the leadership. Perhaps it's some combination. (Caygill, interview, 1998)

Another Clark loyalist, Steve Maharey, echoes his colleagues' opinions:

I'm a great believer that politics is a very curious environment, and one thing that works for sure is success. Nothing else works, necessarily. Some things can; you can go and be nice to people, you can do all sorts of things. But success works. Because... the one thing that motivates politicians is that they want to do things. When they're moving forward, they're with you. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

And their forward movement or lack thereof is judged on the party's position in the polls.

I think the... most important measure [for] politicians is 'how we're doing out there', because it's that that gets you into government, holds you in government, lets you do what you want to do. ...When the polls are up, people [are] kind of bound again, animosity drops away, people start... working together. As soon as

that stops, the animosity starts to rise again. It's a terrible organisational form, really. (Maharey, interview, 1998)

Thus, consensus exists in the caucus regarding: 1) the leader's primary role being to ensure an election victory; and 2) the party's opinion poll ratings being used as the interim indicators for his/her performance in this regard between elections.

The above consensus, however, does not relate logically to the Clark loyalists' adherence to her in 1996. By the time of the May/June challenge, the party's popularity had been lagging for a considerable length of time. In addition, this group of MPs were the harshest judges of Moore's near-victory accomplishment at the 1993 election. What accounted for this paradox?

While all the caucus members unanimously agree on the importance of winning, their ideas of what the best ways are to reach that goal seem to differ. This may explain the rarity of unanimous leadership selections in the NZLP, whose presumed goal is to become a government. With regard to the 1996 situation, the anti-Clark MPs regarded the leader's personal popularity as a way of attaining that goal.

On the other hand, the Clark supporters believed that clear and coherent presentation of well defined policies, as well as reliable and fair (intra-caucus) leadership skills, constituted the successful formula for winning. Naturally, the two groups arrived at quite different conclusions as to the value of Clark, as well as Moore, as the leader.

There is no question that the leader is held ultimately responsible for the welfare of the party. If the leader is not seen as an apt guardian of it (and if there is someone else who is believed to do a better job of it), s/he is in trouble. To retain the leadership, the leader needs to produce the result. Clark's deputy, Michael Cullen, was fully aware of this. Before the 1999 election, he openly predicted a grim future for the leadership team if Labour failed to win the 1999 election: '... if we don't win the next election, both of us will, no doubt, be gone' (Cullen, interview, 1998)<sup>330</sup>.

### The importance of ideology

The leader's ideological position also requires consideration in the PLP leadership selection process. For example, one of the major concerns over Moore's leadership in 1993 was his 'centre-oriented' policy views which were increasingly at variance with the position held by the caucus (centre)left. In their campaign against him, Clark and her supporters zealously stressed the necessity for Labour to clearly re-define its identity as centre-left. At the other end of the party's ideological spectrum, some right MPs such as Austin and Dunne aired their anxieties over a possible radical leftward policy shift under Clark's leadership. The 1996 leadership crisis also had ideological undertones.

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<sup>330</sup> Cullen elaborated on his future if Labour failed to win the 1999 election in another interview without referring to Clark. 'If we lose the next election I think the likelihood is that the party will be looking to replace me'. (Venter, 1999b)

Upon the five frontbenchers' approach to her, Clark quickly referred to it as 'the last gasp of Rogernomics'.

However, how crucial the ideological aspect was for these leadership issues is unclear. It was true that Clark attracted strong support from the 'post-Rogernomics' generations (ie., the 1990 and 1993 intakes) who were generally critical of some of the policy reforms of the fourth Labour Government. In contrast, the 1993 and 1996 Moore supporters were mainly from the pre-1990 intakes, many of whom were part of the controversial Government. But it was too premature to describe the 1993 leadership coup and the 1996 leadership challenge as ideological battles between the left and right. There were some notable exceptions in each camp, such as Caygill and Cullen, that prevent such generalisation.

It is true that in 1993, Moore's lack of commitment to the Labour values and policies was often cited by Clark and her supporters in their justification of the coup. At the same time, the need for Labour to shift its policies to the left (so that it could be seen as a centre-left party) was widely acknowledged by this group. However, the subsequent policy shift that took place under Clark's leadership was by no means major. Certainly, there were some notable changes including proposals for an increase of top income tax and a re-introduction of the flat tertiary fees. But they were not by any standard radical, and most of the other changes merely added details to, and shifted emphasis from the 1993 policies. In this sense, a better description of Clark's 'policy shift' was 'policy re-definition' or 'policy clarification'.

So, was the Clark proponents' expressed concern over Moore's ideological stance just an excuse to discredit Moore? The short answer is no. Two points need to be made here. Firstly, despite what ensued, many of the 1993 Clark supporters genuinely believed that a clear change of the policy direction was necessary, and that that was not forthcoming as long as Moore remained as the leader. And there *was* an ideological difference between Moore and Clark; the former a centrist and the latter a centre-left 'social democrat'. Although this difference in real terms was actually small – small enough to leave moderate/right MPs like Caygill undisturbed – it had *symbolic* importance nevertheless. Moore's reluctance to dissociate the party from the Rogernomics past was a complete anathema to the post-reform, 'centre-left' MPs.

Secondly, Labour's policies are made and approved through the official, collective procedure, and the leader's own policy views have only a limited impact on them. However, the leader can exert a considerable influence when it comes to their presentation and interpretation. The leader is the party's primary spokesperson on every major issue. Moore used his power to control some aspects of Labour policies, of which he personally disapproved, during the 1993 election campaign. His refusal to reaffirm Labour's intention to repeal the Employment Contracts Act and his objection to



the release of some policies have been noted as such examples. In his opponents' eyes, the leader was letting his personal opinions override (or obscure) the official party policies. In other words, the issue was *not* about his personal ideology per se, but about his willingness to disregard collective decision making.

These points suggests that the focal point in leadership selection is *the leader's perceived ability to implement the [agreed] party policies* and do so faithfully. If the leader is seen as likely to represent and adhere to the party policies, as expressed in the manifesto, his/her personal ideology should not become an issue.

It seems safe to assert that ideological consideration enjoys only secondary importance to electoral concerns in Labour's leadership selection (retention) process. For example, Phil Goff points out that the PLP's leadership choices have always been about the leader's personalities and the party's perceived electoral fortune under his/her leadership.

... I've never seen a major division in the Labour Party as representing different ideological viewpoints. Most of the contests of leadership have represented personality differences and perceived differences in an ability to win elections. The ideology is the superficial overlay rather than the driving and motivating force in the leadership change. That's true of all of the leadership changes or attempted changes that I have observed. (Goff, interview, 1998)

One may question the historical validity of the above assertion on the secondary importance of ideological concerns – especially in relation to Douglas' leadership challenges against Lange in 1988 and 1989<sup>331</sup>, which eventually led the latter's resignation. Henderson described the dispute between the two as fundamentally ideological (Henderson, 1992: 106).

Lange believed he had a special responsibility to care for the poor and disadvantaged. Douglas put his faith in the free market. Lange accepted that changes had to be made, that the highly protected nature of the economy could not continue. But for Lange there was a limit to how far the Labour Government could deviate from its traditional collectivist values and accept the extreme individualism of the New Right's faith in market forces. (Henderson, 1992: 106)

Former Cabinet colleague of both Douglas and Lange, Michael Cullen agreed: 'I think the real issue was the policies', adding: 'The personality stuff arose out of the policy differences' (Sheppard, 1999: 71).

There was no doubt that ideological concerns were of particular importance to both Lange and Douglas as well as to some of their core supporters<sup>332</sup> during their battles. With regard to Douglas, some even suggested that he was more interested in the purity

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<sup>331</sup> Former Party President, Margaret Wilson, also mentioned the ideological undertone of the Rowling/Lange leadership transition (Wilson, 1989: 70). For a similar view, see, Bassett (1998: 370)

<sup>332</sup> Since then, at least three former Labour MPs from the fourth Labour Government joined Douglas' ACT party following either their retirement or defeat. They are: Trevor de Cleene, Richard Prebble (the current leader of the party) and Ken Shirley (the deputy leader).

of his ideology than in the party's electoral fate (see, Baysting et al., 1993: 88; and Mulgan, 1992: 520). Also, little doubt existed over the diversity (and, in some cases, incompatibilities) of ideological positions held by the caucus at that time<sup>333</sup>. However, these points do not automatically suggest the supreme importance of ideology to the caucus at large during their lengthy battles. Indeed, some evidence suggests that winning was the most crucial concern for many Labour MPs at that time.

First, Douglas himself seemed to be aware that his policy views would be an insufficient reason for many caucus members – including those who shared his ideology – to vote for him ahead of charismatic Lange. He knew that, in their eyes, Lange was a more valuable asset for Labour's re-election. Realistic about his chance, Douglas reluctantly made himself available as the alternative candidate for the caucus leadership vote on 21 December 1988 only because no other MP decided to stand. The result was a sound and predictable defeat for the former Finance Minister – allegedly by a 23 vote majority (Sheppard, 1999: 167-169). Even during the subsequent and prolonged attack on Lange's leadership, despite his strong commitment to his own ideas, Douglas never attempted to win Labour MPs' support based upon the merits of his policies alone. Instead, his rhetoric emphasised their appeal to the electorate, portraying his proposed reforms as the key to Labour's securing its third term<sup>334</sup>.

Second, many Labour MPs failed to appreciate the ideological nature of the disputes between the two figures. At least two factors contributed to this. The first factor was the speed of the deterioration of the relationship. Although their ideological differences became noticeable towards the end of the first term (1984-1987), especially over the future direction of the Government, they agreed to put them aside and fight the 1987 election as a united team (eg. Russell, 1996: Chapter 12 and 13). However, once the election was over, it did not take long before the differences re-surfaced; only this time they both knew that the growing gap between them was irreconcilable. The second factor that shielded many Labour MPs from the reality of the deteriorating relationship between Douglas and Lange was Lange's inability or unwillingness to articulate his

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<sup>333</sup> As already noted in Chapter 6, apart from those who have joined ACT, Peter Dunne, Clive Matthewson, Margaret Austin, and Jack Elder left the party ostensibly (at least partly) for policy reasons. The ideological distance between Lange and Douglas is best illustrated by the fact that ACT is now widely recognised as the most rightwing party in today's Parliament while Labour is seen as a party of centre-left. In between are Labour's traditional rival, National as well as United and New Zealand First. See, Brechtel and Kaiser (1999).

<sup>334</sup> For example, Douglas was reported to have said in 1989 during his campaign against Lange: 'They [policy issues] are, in my view, the way ahead for New Zealand *and the way to victory for Labour*' (cited by Sheppard, 1999: 186, emphasis added). Also in his own book published in 1993, Douglas criticised Lange's policy preference in the electoral context: 'There was no way we could expect to win the election in 1990 with this combination of high-tax and high-spending policies' (Douglas, 1993: 48).

concerns and actively seek assistance from his like-minded colleagues (eg., see Henderson, 1992: 106; Russell, 1996: 193-194; Davies, 1997: 80)<sup>335</sup>.

Because of these two factors, even the Cabinet Ministers who had closely witnessed the steady deterioration of the relationship between them incorrectly believed that the problem was solvable through improved communication<sup>336</sup> prior to Douglas' resignation<sup>337</sup>. Based upon this misconception, several attempts to reconcile them were made through Palmer (Russell, 1996: 170-171, see also Sheppard, 1999: 188-189) and backbench delegations of Annette King, Jim Sutton, and Clive Matthewson (Baysting, et al, 1993: 93) without success.

### The importance of party unity

The third and last leadership selection (retention) criterion, identified by Jackson was the leader's ability to ensure party unity. From the case studies, however, it appears that this concern does not register in Labour MPs' minds prominently; and when it does, it is only due to its potential impacts on the party's performance at an election.

In the past, there have been occasions upon which the leader's unifying ability became the central focus for leadership selection. Palmer's success in 1989 was a case in point. After open warfare between Lange and Douglas, as well as between their respective supporters, party unity was at a devastating low. Given this, many caucus members saw restoration of internal peace as the primary task for the new leader after Lange. On this point, Palmer emerged as an ideal candidate. Although his repeated attempt as the deputy leader to reconcile Lange and Douglas was ultimately a failure<sup>338</sup>, he was generally viewed as a pacifying figure, untainted by the debilitating factional fights.

However, for those MPs, party unity was only a means to an end, not an end in itself. Their real concern was their fate at the coming election. Since the image of party unity had been long regarded as one of the key ingredients for electoral success in New Zealand<sup>339</sup>, failure to attend this urgent problem was believed to cost seats. (In this sense, one may argue what they sought was the *image* of party unity, not necessarily the

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<sup>335</sup> Douglas appeared to be more effective in this regard, although not significantly so. He had a small bloc of supporters in the Cabinet as well as limited support in the caucus (Russell, 1996: 169-170).

<sup>336</sup> However, communication was a problem for the two figures. Instead of talking through the issues face to face, they resorted to lengthy letter exchanges, which some of the close observers thought aggravated the situation. See, Russell (1996), p.170.

<sup>337</sup> See Douglas' comments in Russell (1996: 199). Annette King (Baysting, et al., 1993: 93) and Helen Clark (Baysting, et al., 1993: 88) made similar remarks.

<sup>338</sup> Palmer himself referred to it as 'probably the greatest failure I ever had in politics' (Russell, 1996: 171).

<sup>339</sup> In describing the situation before his resignation, Lange said: 'That's one of the dilemmas of politics because, you see, the public marks you down terribly for division. Manifested unity is worse than looking slightly weak in leadership. It's a hard thing to choose from'. (Russell, 1986: 198).

reality of it.) Palmer's perceived ability to regain party unity, thus, was valued only in the interest of the party's electoral fortune.

The leadership selections after Palmer have confirmed that party unity is a secondary criterion to election winning abilities in leadership selection. His successor, Moore, was hardly a unifying character. In 1990 his buoyant and energetic yet highly divisive leadership style had been well recognised by his colleagues, and indeed some found him unsuitable for the top position on this ground. But in any event, such concern was overshadowed by MPs' stronger thirst for electoral survival.

Three years later, one of the major concerns about Moore's leadership was his domineering behaviour. A notable number of MPs felt marginalised by him and found it difficult to work as a team in the caucus, led by him. Nevertheless, when a vote was taken on the leadership on 1 December 1993, 19 MPs (including himself) were prepared to support the leader. For his supporters, his perceived ability to win an election weighed more heavily than his reported lack of unifying power.

In 1996, disregard for the leader's ability to unite the caucus became evident again. A significant minority were backing Moore, who had constantly fuelled the internal divisions through provocative comments and constant attacks on the party and the leadership after the loss of his leadership. If anything, his behaviour re-confirmed that he was a dividing, not unifying, force in the caucus. But this point counted little for his supporters. Although being aware of the strong feelings against him in the caucus (and the likelihood of serious divisions following his appointment), they pressed his cause anyway. As far as his supporters were concerned, his divisive nature had to be overlooked for the sake of his recognised campaigning ability. It was further testimony to the minor, subordinate status of the concern for unity when compared to the party's electoral prospect as a leadership selection (retention) criterion in the NZLP.

However, questions arise regarding the 1993 and 1996 Clark supporters, whose reasons for supporting her included her 'inclusive' leadership skills. To them, party unity seemed imperative. There was little doubt that the leadership team (Clark and Caygill) at least genuinely cared about the matter, as their shadow cabinet portfolio allocation decisions epitomised. Nevertheless, how many of Clark's supporters shared her willingness to achieve party unity was debatable. For instance, some MPs of this group became agitated with the impartial shadow cabinet decisions. Similarly, several 'post-Rogernomics' caucus members were reported to have sustained their criticism of their older colleagues, hardly 'unifying' behaviour.

The low priority of unity in the NZLP is in sharp contrast to Stark's findings in Britain. This may seem particularly curious, considering that all the recent PLP leadership contests have been fought between two contenders; under these circumstances, fights are more likely to be intense and personal. Since MPs are either

supporting or opposing the eventual leader, the ensuing divisions are more likely to be severer and more enduring than multi-contender contests. If any party requires a leader with a unifying ability, it seems to be the NZLP, or one very much like it.

There are two possible explanations for this paradox. Firstly, the NZLP, together with the National Party, was once described as one of the most cohesive political parties in the Western world (Jackson, 1987: 46). The two party system, fostered under the First-Past-the-Post electoral system, strongly heightened the importance of party unity almost as a norm for MPs. The future of defectors was immensely grim. Between 1946 and 1990, six MPs resigned from the PLP during their terms, and none of them returned to parliament in the subsequent elections<sup>340</sup>. Presenting a united front, thus, is in MPs' best interest. Because of this political convention, Labour MPs may not actively seek unifying abilities as a requirement in leadership selection.

Secondly, even if there are MPs who might be tempted to disrupt party unity, it is not the leader's role to discipline them. In the PLP, Whips and the deputy leader are more responsible than the leader for maintenance of party unity; the roles of internal coordination, 'trouble-shooting', and 'crisis-management' (Palmer, 1992: 150-151<sup>341</sup>) are normally carried out by them. However, as seen in Clark's case, if there are divisions, the leader needs to step in to ensure that they do not deteriorate any further.

In sum, in the NZLP, party unity is something that the caucus (and the leader) can take for granted more confidently than any British party. The low priority of the leader's unifying ability as a leadership selection (retention) criterion perhaps reflects this confidence. When party unity increases its importance as a leadership selection criterion – as it did in 1989 – it is always within the context of winning an election.

## **Conclusion**

In Chapter 1, this study set out to achieve two aims. The first aim was to reconstruct the 1993 and 1996 leadership crises as accurately as possible. The second aim was to make a substantive contribution to the existing knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms of leadership (de)selections in the NZLP. One of the major problems in studies of leadership durability in general was identified as the absence of systematic theories on the subject. In an attempt to counter this, the study's ultimate goal was set out to provide one for the NZLP leadership. Have these aims been accomplished?

Accurate reconstruction of historical events is always difficult. The difficulty increases if the events deal with recent political issues, especially with the sensitivity surrounding leadership crises. As warned in Chapter 1, the findings in this study have no doubt been restricted by limited access to information, caused by several key actors'

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<sup>340</sup> This record was broken by Jim Anderton in 1990 who retained his seat of Sydenham as a break-away NewLabour candidate.

<sup>341</sup> In making these descriptions, Palmer was referring to the roles of Deputy Prime Minister.

unwillingness to participate in the research. Despite this drawback, sufficient information has been collected, which in turn has shed new light on the events which had hitherto been little known.

The case studies have also provided further understanding of the leadership (de)selection process of the NZLP. Furthermore, through verification of a series of propositions, the study has formulated a theory on leadership durability of the NZLP, which can be summarised below:

- While acquisition and retention of the NZLP leadership requires numerical strength, its durability is greatly affected by the quality of his/her support in the caucus upon his/her selection.
- The quality of support is determined by the proportion of four types of MPs in the caucus. The types are, according to their support reliability: loyalists, pragmatic supporters, waverers, and opponents.
- The quality of support (and potential leadership durability) increases as the proportion of more reliable supporters rises.
- It is in the leader's interest to improve the quality of support through conversion of types of supporters. This is achievable only through success in meeting supporters' expectations and eradicating opponents' concerns. Conversely, a failure in these tasks decreases the support quality, and accordingly, leadership durability.
- Labour MPs' expectations and concerns are related to leaders' abilities in three areas, although the exact contents of each expectation may differ, probably significantly. They are, in order of priority, abilities to: a) win an election; b) represent and implement agreed policies; and c) unify the caucus.
- The leadership often requires waverers (and pragmatic supporters) to secure the numerical strength for survival. Their positions are influenced by four variables, which are: a) the extra-Parliamentary organisation; b) alternative leaders; c) the selection procedure; and d) the timing of the challenge against the incumbents.

#### The importance of followership

Overall, the study has highlighted the importance of followers for successful leadership. This has been recognised by industrial psychologists who have studied various forms of organisations (eg., Rosenbach and Taylor, 1998). But the prominence of the followers is particularly heightened in the PLP because of its leadership selection/de-selection system – the followers (the caucus members) have the sole power to determine the leader's future. In the PLP, the leader has two levels of relationships with the caucus members simultaneously; at one level it is as the leader-follower, and the other as the appointee-appointer. There, support of the followers is necessary not only for more

effective and efficient running of the organisation, but also for the leader's immediate survival.

Traditionally, analysis of the PLP leadership vulnerability has tended to focus on the leader and her/his performance. There is a very good reason for this: to attain and retain the leadership, s/he must perform. However, good performance alone is not sufficient for his/her survival; it needs to be evaluated favourably by her/his caucus colleagues. In the absence of any 'objective' performance measurement - apart from triennial elections - the leader's fate is dependent upon caucus members' subjective opinions of his/her performance<sup>342</sup>. It has been documented here that the Labour caucus members are not a faceless group, passively and uncritically waiting for the leader's orders. On the contrary, they have clear expectations and concerns of the leader as well as self-interest and aspirations, against which they constantly judge the leader's worth. To understand the PLP leadership and its durability, no doubt we have to continue examining the leader - in terms of her/his personality, skills, ideology, etc. But it is also clear that without studying the followers as well, the picture will never be complete.

### **MMP and leadership durability**

In concluding, it seems worthwhile to discuss briefly potential impacts of the new electoral system on the PLP leadership durability.

Although irrelevant to MMP, in the aftermath of the 1996 leadership crisis, an amendment to the selection procedure of the PLP leadership was proposed by the then Party President (Michael Hirschfeld) with Clark's enthusiastic support (Kilroy, 1996b). The suggested change was to extend the selectorate to include ordinary party members, assimilating the direction taken by the British Labour Party and, more recently, the British Conservative Party<sup>343</sup> (Alderman, 1999). It was believed that if approved, this change would considerably benefit Clark who had widespread support amongst the rank and file party members<sup>344</sup> (Kilroy, 1996b). Nevertheless, this move failed to gain momentum, and PLP leadership selection procedure remains as the exclusive privilege of MPs to date.

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<sup>342</sup> One may suggest opinion polls as an 'objective' measurement available to Labour MPs. As evidenced in the study, poll results can have immense impacts on the leader's fortune, precisely because there are not any other 'objective' performance gauges. However, as also documented in the study, how opinion polls are read varies from one Labour MP to another. In comparison to an election result - the definite measurement - poll results allow MPs' subjectivity to play a significant role in their interpretation.

<sup>343</sup> In Britain, the purpose of those changes was believed to be to boost the dwindling party memberships. See, Seyd (1999). Interestingly, such an argument was absent in the NZLP's debate. See, Kilroy (1996b).

<sup>344</sup> Weller's argument that an expansion of the selectorate generally helps incumbent Prime Ministers may also be applicable here. 'The broader the constituency, the more difficult it is to call together and the less vulnerable the prime minister is likely to be' (Weller, 85: 63).

The retention of the leadership selection procedure means that one of the main themes of this study – the importance of the original support composition – is still applicable under the new electoral system. The Labour leader still needs majority support in the caucus to win and survive. To increase leadership durability, the leader needs to meet the supporters' expectations and eradicate the opponents' concerns, in the hope that that will result in more loyalists. The general rule is still: the higher the proportion of loyalists in the caucus, the safer the leadership.

What is of interest is whether the view of Labour's (likely) coalition (or supporting) parties will affect the Labour leader's durability. If s/he attracts strong support (or opposition) from those parties, upon whom Labour's chance of governing depends, does it make the Labour caucus think twice before it replaces the leader? Or, does it not count at all? If the experience so far can be seen as a sign of what is to come, the latter seems to be the case. When Jim Bolger was ousted, National's coalition partner, New Zealand First (NZF) was barely consulted (Bolger, 1998: 16). Furthermore, Bolger's replacement, Shipley, was chosen despite (or because of) her widely recognised incompatibility with Winston Peters, NZF's leader<sup>345</sup>. If this was any indication, the Labour caucus also is unlikely to welcome interference from other parties<sup>346</sup>. Besides, if they are unwilling to share their jealously guarded privilege with their own party members, why should they wish to share it with other political parties, even unofficially?

If the leader's ability to work with possible coalition partners becomes an issue, it will most likely be dealt with internally in the leadership selection process. Probably, it will feature as one of the necessary leadership selection (retention) criteria for the leader under MMP. In fact, this change has already been taking place in the Labour caucus.

In 1993, one of the justifications for Clark's challenge was her suitability (and Moore's unsuitability) to lead the party in a new era. The implications were that MMP would require different roles and skills from the leader to what were demanded by FPP. The new roles and skills are likely to re-shape expectations of the leader, and those new expectations in turn affect the leadership selection (retention) criteria. So, what changes have already taken place so far and what changes are likely to happen in the future?

What has not changed, and is unlikely to change in the future is easy to point out. That is the primary importance of the leader's ability to deliver an election victory. Regardless of the electoral system, the PLP's main aim is to govern. What has changed

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<sup>345</sup> After the leadership change, Peters took two weeks to decide to stay in the coalition with Shipley-led National. During this period, he also wrote to Clark regarding the possibility of forming another coalition Government (Boston and McLeay, 1997: 241-242). When the National-NZF coalition broke down in August 1998, it was partly ascribed to the personality differences between the two leaders. See, for example, Clifton (1998).

<sup>346</sup> This sentiment was expressed in March 1999 when another rumour about a coup against Clark surfaced. The leader of the Alliance, Jim Anderton's comments on the rumour were seen by Labour MPs as unhelpful, inadvertently lending weight to the rumour (Main, 1999)



with the introduction of MMP is the definition of 'winning'. Under the new proportional electoral system, a single party majority government is likely to be a rarity. What has become the norm instead is governance with direct (through formal coalition) or indirect (guarantee of support on confidence matters) support of another party (or other parties). In this sense, an election is now fought at two stages. Firstly, political parties attempt to maximise their representation in the House. Secondly, after the votes are counted, and if any party fails to secure a majority in its own right, parties have to reach an agreement with (an)other party (or parties) for support to form a government.

These two stages require different roles and skills from the leader. For the first stage, party leaders need to have the FPP-type, conventional, 'rhetorical' campaigning ability. As seen in Chapter 5, it was initially argued by the Clark supporters that new skills such as clear and articulate presentation of party policies would replace this ability. However, the Labour caucus quickly realised that those skills may not have been enough. The unchanged importance of the party leader's personal campaigning ability under MMP was clearly reaffirmed at the 1996 election, ironically, by Labour's resurgence in popularity that was triggered by Clark's improved personal performance (Aimer, 1997).

For the second stage of 'winning' - new with MMP - the leader needs to have good interpersonal and negotiation skills. Those skills are also essential for the survival of the Labour(-led) government, as an initial agreement for support does not necessarily warrant governance for a full term. The supporting parties and/or individual MPs have their own interests that may not coincide with those of the major party. If they see fit, they will renege on the initial agreement, depriving the major party of the right to govern<sup>347</sup>. To avoid this, the leader continuously needs to work on the relationship with the coalition partners.

One possible ramification of this is that the leader's 'unifying' ability may rise in importance as one of the leadership selection (retention) criteria, along the same line as the British political parties. Since Labour's traditional norm of strong internal cohesion cannot be applied to its coalition partners, unity of a government is no longer so reliable. Sensing this, Henderson asserts that a successful MMP leader needs to be pragmatic, flexible, and ready to compromise. The domineering and power-seeking type, on the other hand, is believed to be disadvantageous (Henderson, 1997: 79). Clark concurs. After surviving the 1996 leadership crisis, she boasted:

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<sup>347</sup> Under MMP, government can take four forms. They are: single-majority government, single-minority government, multi-party (coalition) majority government, multi-party (coalition) minority government (see Boston, et al, 1996: 31). Unless Labour wins enough seats in the House to become a single-majority government, it needs support of (an)other party (or parties) either through formal coalition or agreement to support Labour on confidence issues.

I... believe that the skills I have of networking, managing a diverse team of people, and working in a collaborative manner are ideally suited to the MMP governments of the future. Neither the authoritarian character, the bully, or the person with the messiah complex will get far in a political system in which governments have to negotiate their programmes and can't impose them through sheer weight of numbers. (Clark, 1996)

To the list of necessary skills and attributes for a successful MMP leader, one may add highly developed communication skills. The leader cannot conduct effective negotiations or maintain good working relationships without them. Thomas E. Cronin's following comments are particularly apt: -

A leader has to resonate with followers. Part of being an effective leader is having excellent ideas, or a clear sense of direction, a sense of mission. But such ideas or vision are useless unless the would-be leader can communicate them and get them accepted by followers. A two-way engagement or two-way interaction is constantly going on. When it ceases, leaders become lost, out of touch, imperial or worse. (Cronin, 1993: 10)

However, it is important to stress that the roles of the leader under MMP are still unfolding and yet to be settled. Perhaps this was most evidently exemplified by the fate of the first MMP Prime Minister, Bolger. When he was ousted in a bloodless coup in November 1997, one of the causes of his downfall was his closeness to Peters (Boston and McLeay, 1997: 241). In other words, Bolger fell victim to his (excessive) success in forging a good relationship with the coalition partner. In the coup supporters' eyes, the close association with the accident prone and increasingly unpopular New Zealand First was threatening National's re-election chances. In an attempt to rectify this problem, they opted for another leader who was expected to provide a 'clear sense of purpose and direction' (Smith, 1997) distancing the party from its coalition partner.

Therefore, a successful leader under MMP has to carefully balance the two roles of 'winning'. Without successfully playing both roles, the party cannot attain or retain power. At the same time, if the balance is handled poorly, the two roles can easily create – possibly fatal – conflicts for the leader. For example, pressing Labour's cause to increase its re-election chances may alienate its supporting partners, possibly resulting in a loss of power. Similarly, as Bolger painfully learnt, too much harmony with supporting parties (and individuals) may be seen as blurring the party's distinctive 'brand' image<sup>348</sup>. In order to carry out this delicate balancing act, the ability to make sound political judgements, together with political sensitivity, may be essential for the leader.

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<sup>348</sup> It is commonly seen that the current coalition agreement between Labour and the Alliance is designed to allow each party to retain individual identity. See, for example, Boston (1999). See also Clark's speech to the 1998 Alliance annual conference (H. Clark, 1998).

The background of the introduction of MMP was wide-spread public disillusionment with politics following the Labour (1984-1990) and National (1990-1993) Governments (Mulgan, 1997: 64). The new electoral system was expected to let the voters regain power over future governments and, ultimately, the destiny of the country. However, after witnessing a series of crises, including the collapse of the first coalition Government and a number of defections from their original parties, the public seem to have already lost confidence in MMP – even before the completion of the first three-year term. Astonishingly, calls for yet another change to the electoral system have arisen both from the public<sup>349</sup> and politicians<sup>350</sup>.

Needless to say, every healthy democracy needs the public's confidence in the political system as its foundation. At the moment, there are many signs indicating that the foundation is under significant strain. Whether New Zealand decides to retain MMP as the method to select its national representatives or not, restoring people's ailing faith in the political system is one of the most urgent tasks for political leaders. But the leaders cannot carry out the task alone; they need the followers' support and good will. Leaders can lead only while followers let them. Without the latter's confidence, the leadership is just a token title. Regaining lost public trust of may take time. And time is allowed to leaders only if their leadership is durable. Constant changes of political leaders not only make the accomplishment of the task impossible, but also enhance people's doubts and cynicism in politics.

Democracy is like a long, connected chain of responsibility. Political parties have responsibilities to recruit and stand the best possible candidates. It is our duty then to choose our representatives wisely. But once elected, it is the politicians' task to select leaders worthy of their constant and loyal support.

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<sup>349</sup> For the level of public dissatisfaction with MMP, see, for example, Laugesen (1999b), Corbett (1999), and Hunt (1999). In August 1998, a petition to cut the number of MPs from 120 to 99 collected sufficient signatures (10% of registered voters) to force a referendum on the issue, adjunct to the 1999 General Election.

<sup>350</sup> One of the most vocal politicians who tried to capitalise on the public feeling was former Prime Minister, Shipley. At the 1998 National Party Conference, she expressed her belief that 'some change will be required in the future' with regard to both the number of MPs and the electoral system. See, Shipley (1998).

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